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THE WRITING OF ENGLISH

BOOKS BY
S. P. B. MAIS

This Unknown Island
England's Pleasance
The History of English Literature
England's Character

THE WRITING OF ENGLISH

By
S. P. B. MAIS



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To
JILL
who writes so much
less
and so much
better
With love

“Text-books of English should be witty and full of go and exuberance and independence and leg-pulling all the way through, whoever they are for.”

G. Y. ELTON.

“To teach people to dare to make heaps of mistakes and throw mistakes in heaps in all directions is perhaps the main object of an English course.” G. Y. ELTON.

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PREFACE

“ A man may say his private devotions in any language he knows, in public he must speak in a language understood of the people.”—Extract from a letter to *The Times*, “ Z.”

“ Be chary with your adjectives, and avoid all clichés like poison. There are only two people whose good opinion you need care about—your Maker and yourself. They are both very hard to please.”—DEAN INGE.

“ Writing, to be good, requires a lively intelligence and sympathy, a well-stored mind and a feeling heart. It must be sincere, lucid and vivacious.”—SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

THE writing of English is fun, or it is nothing. I do not mean by this that it is easy, but it can be as much a source of delight as cricket, to which game it bears a strong resemblance. Great masters of English are as rare as great cricketers, but the glow of delight that suffuses us when we bring off, usually unexpectedly, a graceful stroke with the bat is akin to the grin of delight which Thomas Hardy assures us comes over the face of the writer who achieves a *mot juste*, who has managed to say precisely what he has in his mind.

Success in writing, as in cricket, depends partly on heredity, partly on practice, partly on a natural flair, and partly on energy.

It is, however, not enough to have the desire to excel.

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It is helpful to watch the masters, though not always advisable to model our style on theirs. It is helpful to obey the rules, though I fear that insistence on a multiplicity of rules that are rather advisable than essential has gone a long way to create a distaste for committing our thoughts to paper. We are too much afraid of making mistakes.

It is well to remember in this connexion that most of the masters of English have broken rules with complete impunity.

George Meredith seems to have gone out of his way to split infinitives, and Shakespeare certainly didn't care where his prepositions ultimately arrived in the sentence.

The bugbear of too many rules has reduced delight in writing to a drudgery, and though I am the last man to deny the pleasure of mental discipline, I count that pleasure as among the scientific, rather than the æsthetic delights. The main business in writing is to enjoy writing and to convey that enjoyment to others. And it is quite possible to worry so much over the acquisition of the rules of writing that you never start to write at all.

In this connexion remember Dr. Johnson's advice on education :—

“Sir, it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt them both.”

So with writing.

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The only way to learn is to do it.

Bad English isn't half so much a matter of breaking rules as of being lazy or too "refined."

Think of the word "pardon."

"Pardon" as a euphemism for "what?" is an irritating mixture of the lazy and affected that stamps the user as wholly without regard for his mother tongue, and if we are at all sensitive about language, we shudder at the vain repetition of this unseemly word. It has lost all its original polish. It is no longer bright with courtesy. It is dull and old and vulgar and meaningless.

But in writing we let just as dull, lifeless and meaningless words creep in to fill up a line, little realising that they are as dangerous as old decayed or dead teeth in one's mouth, and at all costs, for the sake of the well-being of the rest, should come out at once, even if it means a temporary wrench to part with them.

The usage of words fluctuates at least as quickly as women's fashions. What is correct and exclusive to-day becomes popular to-morrow and outworn next week. "Definitely" is now passing through these stages.

And the odd thing is that purity of ancestry and correctness of derivation will not necessarily save a word's life. English public opinion in language is very strong and outweighs all authority. The B.B.C. may threaten and command, but the average man will persist in his own accentuation or pronunciation defiantly. The dictionary may persist in accenting the second syllable and lengthening the "o" in abdomen and octopus, but we who suffer

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in the one or from the other, keep our "o's" as short as possible.

What care we that "Eeross" would certainly sound meaningless in the ears of any Greek? That is our name for the love-god, and if the Greeks pronounced it otherwise, that is their fault for being foreigners. They ought to know better.

Ours is indeed an insolent language.

But insolence is usually accompanied by vigour, and makes for vitality.

The American brand of English is delightfully insolent, and has contributed by its unremitting energy in new mintings, not only to the gaiety of nations, but to the liveliness of Anglo-Saxon expression.

It is generally and quite untruly believed in England that the English of the United States is a less respectable brand than ours. The truth, unpalatable as it may be to our vanity, is that the United States speak an English that would be more easily recognised by Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton than the English that you and I use, and yet it is an English that moves with the times more adequately than ours does.

We still employ worn-out metaphors. The Americans, with a nimbler sense of aptness, invent fresh ones to suit new circumstances. I am not, in point of fact, thinking of Hollywood English, but it is a mistake to sneer at all the English that you hear on American films. The standard of the language there spoken has improved out of all recognition in the last year. It has ceased to be the language of gangsters. It now faithfully reflects the language of cultured America.

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Listen carefully the next time you go to the films to the voices of William Powell and Myrna Loy.

I can assure you that if your intonation is as clear and the timbre of your voice is as pleasant to listen to as theirs, you need not fret about your future. You do not hear them talk as some of our public speakers do, of "exploring every avenue," of "leaving no stone unturned."

"Clear your mind of cant," said Doctor Johnson. He might have added "Clear your speech of clichés."

The Americans are not for ever fussing about correct usages. They do not worry whether their phrases betray good or bad breeding. Their object is achieved if the phrase vividly expresses what they want to say. They do not talk, as our newspapers do, of people "sustaining fatal injuries," instead of the simple word "died," or of "an interesting event," when they mean "birth."

The danger with us is of becoming over-refined. Good manners, like good taste in clothes, are marked by ease and a lack of ostentation. It is only the people who are frightened of dropping aitches who really make us conscious of their presence.

It is only the people who are uncertain of their native tongue who call a napkin by the grotesque name of "serviette," and only people with strained ideas of modesty who substitute "lingerie" for underclothes or knickers. The golden rule both in speaking and writing English is to keep your words as simple and as short as possible.

The first thing that the writer has to do is to choose what is most worth describing, and leave out

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the rest. Then he has to select the best from this, and again leave out the rest. Selection. Selection. Selection. That is the secret of good writing.

Dean Inge's advice is as sound as anybody's. It is this : " Steep yourself in the best literature and read aloud ; write very slowly. Make it your object to say exactly what you mean, as simply, clearly and beautifully as you can. Keep a notebook for ideas as they come to you, and write in it as carefully as if the notebook was for publication."

G. W. Steevens, a very graphic war-correspondent, learnt by heart a page of Roget's Thesaurus every day, so that he would have at ready command synonyms for almost every word in the language.

Mr. C. K. Ogden, who has devoted pretty well the whole of his life to the study of language, has reduced the number of words that we need use to a minimum of 850.

People's vocabularies vary as much as their incomes.

Mr. Winston Churchill is credited with a working vocabulary of 30,000 words and a potential vocabulary of 60,000 words.

A teashop waitress manages on about 7,000.

But wealth in words as in pounds depends more on the use you put them to than on the amount you possess.

In the following chapters I have tried to show you to what diverse uses these words can be put. Not every form of writing suits everybody alike. A fine poet may be an indifferent letter-writer, though in point of fact four of our best letter-writers, Keats, Gray, Cowper and Pope, were also considerable poets.

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Mr. H. G. Wells is a novelist but no playwright, and Mr. Bernard Shaw is a dramatist but no poet. Our business is to find the medium that best suits our capacity for expression, and to do this satisfactorily we ought obviously to try experiments with every form of expression.

I have given generous extracts from the best in each kind in order to stimulate you not to imitate them, but to surpass them in their own field. I have relegated to the end the dreadful examples, for, though often funny, evil communications do still occasionally corrupt good manners. On the other hand, by straightening out their errors you may avoid falling into similar traps yourself.

I do not flatter myself that even if you get the best out of this book you will be a master of English, but I do believe that, if you use it aright, you will find the writing of English come to you more easily, and that you will find the practice enjoyable if not materially profitable.

S. P. B. M.

TANSLEY,
SHOREHAM-BY-SEA,
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CHAPTER I

DIARIES

Writing to Ourselves

THE easiest form of writing is the writing of a diary. It is indeed so easy that it is frowned upon by many people as a form of self-indulgence.

But in every girl's vanity bag there is a pocket-mirror which she is continually taking out in order to see that her face and hair are in order. It is surely at least equally useful to have a pocket-book in which she can continually see whether her mind is in order.

A diary is a mental mirror.

It is written in secrecy, it is intended for one pair of eyes only, the writer's (it is hopeless to write as if someone were looking over your shoulder), and it contains or should contain an accurate record of each day's actions and thoughts.

Each day's actions and thoughts, remember.

The very word, diary, reminds you that it must be a regular, daily record.

The length of each entry need not, in fact, will not, be the same. Pocket-diaries are usually divided into equal sections to cover each day, but these

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are not diaries in the true sense, but engagement lists.

A diary should be kept in a book the pages of which should be large and not spaced into dates.

You should write as your mood dictates. On certain days you will feel an urge to describe in detail some incident that has made a deep impression on you. On other days you will have to force yourself to write at all.

Doctor Johnson tells us that he started keeping a diary no fewer than fourteen times.

He recommended Boswell to keep a full and unreserved journal of his life on the ground that it would be a very good exercise and give him great satisfaction to read when the facts therein recorded were fading from his memory. He also told him to keep it private and leave commands for it to be burnt at his death.

I am not recommending that you should write a diary in order that you shall read it in old age. But I do suggest that you keep a diary in order that you shall look back at it this time next year and say : " Could I really have been such a fool only a year ago ? "

To dip into your old diary ought to give you the same delight that you get from looking into an old photograph album. It gives you a feeling of content to think that you have grown and changed for the better so much, though I must confess that I was badly shaken to find in my school diaries mainly a record of ducks scored at cricket and money borrowed from trusting friends.

Diaries

The things that I now want to know about those days were not recorded, and my schooldays are in consequence more or less a blank to me.

I kept a diary, but I kept it in the wrong way. I should have kept a record of my thoughts, and the way that things impressed me, instead of a bald statement of facts that were of no particular interest then and certainly are of no interest now.

Perhaps I am making it sound as if diary-writing were not the simplest form of writing.

It is the simplest in this respect.

You are writing to yourself from whom none of your thoughts is really hidden. They only look different when you write them down, and the fact that they are written prevents them from flying away and being forgotten.

There is a curious moral effect in honest diary-keeping. Arnold Bennett once said that none of us is really honest enough to write down his daily doings or his thoughts. The sight on paper would make us so shocked at ourselves that we should stop keeping a diary.

You write everything down because it is impossible at the time to tell which will be the things that you want to remember and which the things that you won't want again. It is rather like packing for the holidays. The same rule holds. It is better to take too much than too little.

The word "holidays" reminds me that even if during the rest of the year you may not feel the "itch to record" very strong, on holiday you always want some record to remind you, and if you can you take a film of your caravan journeyings or

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your games on the sands, but if you keep a diary as well, you have material for a "talkie."

Now, whether you describe what you eat, what you wear, your games, your work, the people you meet and the places you visit, the success or failure of your diary will depend on the amount of enthusiasm you bring to life.

If you are bored with things in general, that boredom will creep into your diary. A bored person will be boring wherever he goes and in whatever he undertakes.

To be a good diarist you must be able to see clearly and judge with discrimination. The more things you are interested in the more interesting you yourself become.

But it is not necessary to be living in the centre of things to write a readable diary. One of the most entertaining diaries that I have ever read is that of the Sussex village store-keeper, Thomas Turner. He lived in East Hoathly, and kept a diary eleven years, from 1754 till 1765. When he began it he was the village schoolmaster earning threepence a week. He then became grocer, draper, haberdasher, hatter, clothier, druggist, ironmonger, stationer, glover and undertaker all in one.

He was a man of no importance at all, but he had the secret of all true diary-keepers. He was interested in everybody and everything, not least in himself. He tells us what he eats, what he drinks, and how he over-drinks, of his quarrels with his wife, of the books he reads, of his thoughts, of his neighbours, of his sports. Here are some typical extracts :—

Oct. 31, 1762. No service at our church in the

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morning or afternoon. I dined on a roasted goose and apple sauce. I drank tea with Mr. Carman and his family. This is not the right use that Sunday should be applied to. No, it is not.

June 28, 1763. In the even, Joseph Fuller and myself plaid a game of cricket with Mr. Geo. Banister and James Fuller, for half a crown's worth of punch, which we won very easy, but it being hot and drinking a pretty deal of punch, it got into my head, so that I came home not sober.

Nov. 25, 1763. The curate of Laughton came to the shop in the forenoon, and he having bought some things of me (and I could wish he had paid for them) dined with me, and also staid in the afternoon till he got in liquor, and being so complaisant as to keep him company, I was quite drunk. How I do detest myself for being so foolish.

July 3, 1765. Thank God I begin once more to be a little settled. I have, it's true, not married a learned lady, nor is she a gay one ; but I trust she is good-natured, and one that will use her utmost endeavour to make me happy. As to her fortune, I shall one day have something considerable, and there seems to be rather a flowing stream. Well here let us drop the subject and begin a new one.

Perhaps you see now why it's a good thing to keep your diary an absolute secret.

The most amusing and interesting diary that we possess is that of Samuel Pepys, who was born in 1633. He wrote his diary in a special code of shorthand, but as he left the key to the code behind him when he died, he obviously meant us to have the delight of reading it if we could decipher his code.

As a matter of fact, it took one man, working twelve hours a day, three years to decode the 3,000 pages of his nine years' diary. Pepys began it in 1660,

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when he was twenty-seven, and stopped in 1669, because he thought (wrongly, as it happened) that he was going blind.

He may sound to you at first a very silly man. In point of fact he was a public servant of very high importance, for though he was unemployed and without means when at the age of twenty-two he married the Huguenot refugee, Elizabeth St. Michel, who was only fifteen, he rose to become Secretary to the Admiralty, and rich enough to lend Charles II. what would be to-day £140,000 without any hope of its return.

His diary is the best in the world because he does not mind giving himself away.

He is completely honest about himself and reveals with absolute candour all his foolishness, his sulks, his meanness, his love of dressing-up, and his insatiable curiosity to see everything that is going on.

It is because he puts down the tiniest, most trifling things that his diary is so vivid.

Here are some typical extracts :—

16 Jan., 1660. I played on my flageolet, and staid till nine o'clock, very merry and drawn on with one song after another till it came to be so late. So parted, and thence home, where I found my wife and maid a-washing. I staid up till the bell-man came by with his bell just under my window as I was writing of this very line, and cried "Past one of the o'clock, and a cold, frosty, windy morning." I then went to bed, and left my wife and the maids a-washing still.

19 Jan., 1661. I went to the theatre where I saw the "Lost Lady." Here I was troubled to be seen by four of our office-clerks, which sat in the half-crown box and I in the 1/6.

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28 Jan., 1661. To the theatre where I saw again the "Lost Lady"; and here I, sitting behind in a dark place, a lady spit backward upon me by mistake, not seeing me; but after seeing her to be a very pretty lady I was not troubled at it at all.

11 April, 1661. Of all the journeys that ever I made this was the merriest, and I was in a strange mood for mirth. By and by we come to two little girls keeping cows, and I saw one of them very pretty, so I had a mind to make her ask my blessing, and telling her that I was her godfather, she asked me innocently whether I was not Ned Wooding, and I said that I was, so she kneeled down and very simply called "Pray, godfather, pray to God to bless me," which made us very merry, and I gave her twopence.

May 23, 1661. At table I had very good discourse with Mr. Ashmole, wherein he did assure me that frogs and many insects do often fall from the sky, ready formed.

4 Feb., 1662. Discoursing of the nature of serpents, he told us some that in the waste places of Lancashire do grow to a great bigness, and that do feed upon larks, which they take thus: They observe when the lark is soared to the highest, and do crawl till they come to be just underneath them; and there they place themselves with their mouths uppermost, and there they do eject poyson up to the bird; for the bird do suddenly come down again in its course of a circle, and falls directly into the mouth of the serpent; which is very strange.

29 Sep., 1662. To the King's Theatre, where we saw "Midsummer Night's Dream," the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.

25 Feb., 1667. Lay long in bed, talking with pleasure with my poor wife, how she used to make coal fires, and wash my foul clothes with her own hand for me, poor wretch! in our little room at Lord Sandwich's: for which I ought for ever to love and admire her, and do.

22 Mar., 1667. My wife having dressed herself in a silly dress of a blue petticoat uppermost, and a white

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satin waistcoat and white hood, did together with my being hungry, which always makes me peevisish, make me angry ; but when my belly was full were friends again.

14th July, 1667.

And so the women and W. Hewer and I walked upon the Downes, where a flock of sheep was ; and the most pleasant and innocent sight that I ever saw in my life. We find a shepherd and his little boy reading, far from any houses or sight of people, the Bible to him ; so I made the boy read to me, which he did, with the forced tone that children do usually read, that was mighty pretty, and then I did give him something, and went to the father and talked with him ; and I find he had been a servant in my cozen Pepys's house, and told me what was become of their old servants. He did content himself mightily in my liking his boy's reading, and did bless God for him the most like one of the old patriarchs that ever I saw in my life, and it brought those thoughts of the old age of the world in my mind for two or three days after. We took notice of his woollen knit stockings of two colours mixed, and of his shoes shod with iron shoes, both at the toe and heels, and with great nails in the soles of his feet, which was mighty pretty : and, taking notice of them, " Why," says the poor man, " the downes, you see, are full of stones and we are faine to shoe ourselves thus ; and these," says he, " will make the stones fly till they sing before me" I did give the poor man something, for which he was mighty thankful, and I tried to cast stones with his horne crooke. He values his dog mightily, that would turn a sheep any way which he would have him when he goes to fold them : told me there was about eighteen score sheep in his flock, and that he had four shillings a week the year round for keeping of them. So we posted thence with mighty pleasure in the discourse we had with this poor man ; and Mrs. Turner, in the common fields here, did gather one of the prettiest nose gays that ever I saw in my life.

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18 Aug., 1667. Into St. Dunstan's Church, where I heard an able sermon, and stood by a pretty modest maid whom I did labour to take by the hand but she wouldn't, but got further and further from me. And at last I could perceive her to take pins out of her pocket to prick me if I should touch her again ; and then I fall to gaze upon another pretty maid in a pew close to me, and she on me ; and I did go close to take her hand, which she suffered a little, and then withdrew. So the sermon ended.

5 Oct., 1667.

At noon home, and by coach to Temple Bar to a India shop, and there bought a gown and sash, which cost me 26s. ; and so to my Lord Crew and there dined, and after dinner I to my tailor's, and there took up my wife and Willet, and so to the King's house : and there going in met with Knepp, and she took us up into the tiring-rooms, and to the women's shift, where Nell was dressing herself and was all unready, and is very pretty, prettier than I thought. And so walked all up and down the house above, and then below into the scene-room and there sat down, and she gave us fruit ; and here I read the questions to Knepp, while she answered me, through all her part of " Flora's Figary's " which was acted to-day. But, Lord ! to see how they were both painted would make a man mad, and did make me loath them ; and what base company of men comes among them, and how lewedly they talk ! and how poor the men are in clothes, and yet what a show they make on the stage by candle-light, is very observable.

27 Feb., 1668. But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind-musique, which did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife.

That is the secret of Pepys' charm. Everything in life excites him, from having his ears washed to watching the Great Fire of London.

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5 Oct., 1667.

At noon home, and by coach to Temple Bar to a India shop, and there bought a gown and sash, which cost me 26s. ; and so to my Lord Crew and there dined, and after dinner I to my tailor's, and there took up my wife and Willet, and so to the King's house : and there going in met with Knepp, and she took us up into the tireing-rooms, and to the women's shift, where Nell was dressing herself and was all unready, and is very pretty, prettier than I thought. And so walked all up and down the house above, and then below into the scene-room and there sat down, and she gave us fruit ; and here I read the questions to Knepp, while she answered me, through all her part of " Flora's Figary's " which was acted to-day. But, Lord ! to see how they were both painted would make a man mad, and did make me loath them ; and what base company of men comes among them, and how lewdly they talk ! and how poor the men are in clothes, and yet what a show they make on the stage by candle-light, is very observable.

27 Feb., 1668. But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind-musique, which did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife.

That is the secret of Pepys' charm. Everything in life excites him, from having his ears washed to watching the Great Fire of London.

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I said that a diary should be a mental mirror. It can also be a severe mental discipline, a sort of confessional.

Doctor Johnson was much diverted, according to Boswell, with the following specimens from the Journal of an Irish Quaker, called Doctor Rutty :—

Tenth month, 1753.

23. Indulgence in bed an hour too long.

Twelfth month.

17. An hypochondriack obnubilation from wind and indigestion.

Ninth month.

28. An overdose of whisky.

29. A dull, cross, cholerick day.

First month, 1757.

22. A little swinish at dinner and repast.

31. Dogged on provocation.

Second month.

5. Very dogged or snappish.

14. Snappish on fasting.

26. Cursed snappishness to those under me, on a bodily indisposition.

Third month.

11. On a provocation, exercised a dumb resentment for two days, instead of scolding.

22. Scolded too vehemently.

23. Dogged again.

Fourth month.

29. Mechanically and sinfully dogged.

If you have done anything mean it looks twice as nasty on paper, so to write our meanest actions and thoughts down may go some way to making us less mean.

Whether a dull man is likely to be cured of his dullness by chronicling his boring existence I do not know.

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In the 317th number of the *Spectator* dated Tuesday, March 4th, 1712, extracts are given from the diary of a sober citizen that would make an excellent text on the abuse of leisure. I have a little curtailed it.

- Monday, 8 o'clock. Put on my cloathes.
4 o'clock. Washed hands.
10, 11, 12. Smoked three pipes.
1 o'clock. Chid Ralph for mislaying my tobacco box.
2 o'clock. Dinner. Too many plums and no suet.
3-4. Slept.
4-6. Walked. Wind S.S.E.
6-10. Club.
10 o'clock. Bed.
Tuesday, 8 o'clock. Rose.
9 o'clock. Washed hands and face.
10, 11, 12. Walked.
1. Pot of beer.
2-3. Dined. Sprouts wanting.
3. Slept.
4-6. Read.
6-10. Club.
10. Bed.
Wed. 8 o'clock. Hands but not face.

And so from hour to hour he rots and rots. And here's a girl who is just as bad. Here are extracts from the journal of a young lady of fashion taken from the *Spectator*, No. 323, dated Tuesday, March 11th, 1712 :—

- Tuesday night. Could not go to sleep till one in the morning for thinking of my journal.
Wed., 8-10. Drank two dishes of chocolate.
10-11. Eat a slice of bread and butter.

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	11-1.	Toilette. Tried doing my hair in new way. I look best in blue.
	1-2.30.	Drove.
	2.30-4.	Dinner.
	4-6.	Dressed.
	6-11.	Cards.
Th.,	8-10.	Chocolate.
	10-11.	Tea.
Rest of morning.		Broke a tooth in tortoise-shell comb.
	3-4.	Dinner cold.
	4-11.	Company.
	12.	Bed.
Fri.,	8.	Read letters.
	10.	Stayed within all day. Not at home.
	10-12.	Sorted ribbands. Broke blue china cup.
	12-1.	Shut myself up.
	1.	Worked half a violet leaf in flowered handkerchief. Eyes ached.
	3-4.	Dined.
	4-12.	Changed my mind, dressed, went out, played cards.
Sat.,	8.	Rose.
	8-9.	Shifted a patch for half an hour before I could determine it. Fixed it above left eye-brow.
	9-12.	Tea. Dressed.
	3-4.	Dined.
	4-6.	Tea.
	6.	Opera.
Sunday.		Indisposed.

It is quite likely that we do not realise how much of life we let slip through our fingers until we begin to write down how we are spending it.

It is a much wiser thing to keep a strict account of how we spend our time than of how we spend our money.

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“ Keeping accounts, Sir,” said Dr. Johnson, “ is of no use when a man is spending his own money, and has nobody to whom he is to account. You won’t eat less beef to-day, because you have written down what it cost yesterday.”

On the other hand, it is quite possible that you will waste less time to-day after reading in your diary how much you wasted of yesterday.

And after reading the diary of someone who lived every moment of his life to the full, William Cobbett, for instance, we are somehow stimulated to live our own a little more fully.

It has often been said that no form of writing is so dreary as the journal or diary of a traveller, and indeed to judge from their diaries quite a number of travellers would have been better advised to save their money and stay at home, but Cobbett is the right sort of traveller. Nothing escapes him, and he sympathises as well as he observes.

This is what I call a good traveller’s journal :—

Fri., 1st Sep., 1826.

I set out from Heytesbury this morning about six o’clock. Last night, before I went to bed, I found that there were some men and boys in the house, who had come all the way from Bradford, about twelve miles, to get nuts. These people were men and boys that had been employed in the cloth factories at Bradford and about Bradford. I had some talk with these nutters, and I am quite convinced not that clothmaking is at an end, but that it never will be again what it has been. Before last Christmas these manufacturers had full work, at one shilling and threepence a yard at broad-cloth weaving. They have now a quarter work, at one shilling a yard ! One shilling and threepence a yard for this weaving has been given at all times within the memory of man !

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These poor nutters were extremely ragged. I saved my supper, and I fasted instead of breakfasting.

That was three shillings, which I had saved, and I added five to them, with a resolution to save them afterwards, in order to give these chaps a breakfast for once in their lives. There were eight of them, and I gave them two quartern loaves, two pounds of cheese, and eight pints of strong beer. The fellows were very thankful, but the conduct of the landlord and landlady pleased me exceedingly. When I came to pay my bill, they had said nothing about my bed, which had been a very good one ; and when I asked why they had not put the bed into the bill, they said they would not charge anything for the bed since I had been so good to the poor men. Yes, said I, but I must not throw the expense upon you. I had no supper, and I have had no breakfast ; and therefore, I am not called upon to pay for them ; but I have had the bed. It ended by my paying for the bed, and coming off, leaving the nutters at their breakfast, and very much delighted with the landlord and his wife.

Cobbett has the capacity to make you feel that you are sharing his rural ride.

This is good traveller's diary-writing :—

His wife brought out the cut loaf, and a piece of Wiltshire cheese, and I took them in hand, gave Richard a good hunch, and took another for myself. I verily believe that all the pleasure of eating enjoyed by all the feeders in London in a whole year does not equal that which we enjoyed in gnawing this bread and cheese, as we rode over this cold down, whip and bridle-reins in one hand, and the hunch in the other. Before we got this supply of bread and cheese, we, though in ordinary times a couple of singularly jovial companions, and seldom going a hundred yards (except going very fast) without one or the other speaking, began to grow dull or rather glum. The way seemed long, and when I had

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to speak in answer to Richard, the speaking was as brief as it might be.

Unfortunately, just at this critical period, one of the loops that held the straps of Richard's little portmanteau broke ; and it became necessary for me to fasten the portmanteau upon my saddle. This, which was not the work of more than five minutes, would, had I had breakfast, have been nothing at all, and indeed, matter of laughter. But now, it was something. It was his "fault" for capering and jerking about "so." I jumped off, saying "Here ! I'll carry it myself !" And then I began to take off the remaining strap, pulling, with great violence and in great haste. Just at this time my eye met his, in which I saw great surprise, and feeling the just rebuke, feeling heartily ashamed of myself I instantly changed my tune and manner, cast the blame upon the saddle, and talked of the effectual means which we would take to prevent the like in future.

You have now seen how a diary should be written.

All that remains now is that you should start. Write these words of Doctor Johnson on the opening page :—

Write down every thing that you remember, for you cannot judge at first what is good or bad ; and write immediately while the impression is fresh, for it will not be the same a week hence.

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A SELECTION FROM FAMOUS DIARIES

John Wesley is remembered as the founder of Methodism, as a preacher surcharged with spiritual enthusiasm, and as a hymn writer. Although his journal for the most part is concerned with the birth and rise of the Methodist movement, and the trials and tribulations it underwent (we can gain a wonderful insight into the daily life of the eighteenth century from its pages), here and there are delightfully naïve passages, such as the following :—

March, 1770. I went on slowly, through Staffordshire and Cheshire, to Manchester. In this journey, as well as in many others, I observed a mistake that almost universally prevails ; and I desire all travellers to take good notice of it, which may save them both from trouble and danger. Near thirty years ago I was thinking, “ How is it that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading ? ” (History, poetry and philosophy I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at other times.) No account can possibly be given but this : because then I throw the reins on his back. I then set myself to observe ; and I aver that, in riding above 100,000 miles, I scarce ever remember any horse (except two that would fall head over heels any way) to fall, or make a considerable stumble, while I rode *with a slack rein*.

From the diary of Dorothy Wordsworth, sister of the poet, we can get a very clear picture of the household at Dove Cottage.

Friday, May 14th, 1802. A very cold morning—hail and snow showers all day. We went to Brothers wood, intending to get plants, and to go along the shore of the lake to the foot. We did go a part of the way, but there

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was no pleasure in stepping along that difficult sauntering road in this ungenial weather. We turned again, and walked backwards and forwards in Brothers wood. William tired himself with seeking an epithet for the cuckoo. I sate a while upon my last summer seat, the mossy stone, William's, unoccupied, beside me, and the space between, where Coleridge has so often lain. The oak trees are just putting forth yellow knots of leaves. The ashes with their flowers passing away, and leaves coming out ; the blue hyacinth is not quite full blown ; rowans are coming out ; marsh marigolds in full glory ; the little star plant, a star without a flower. We took home a great load of rowans, and planted them about the orchard. After dinner I worked bread, then came and mended stockings beside William ; he fell asleep. After tea I walked to Rydale for letters. It was a strange night. The hills were covered over with a slight covering of hail or snow, just so as to give them a hoary winter look with the black rocks. The woods looked miserable, the coppices as green as grass, which looked quite unnatural, and they seemed half shrivelled up, as if they shrank from the air. O, thought I ! what a beautiful thing God has made winter to be, by stripping the trees, and letting us see their shapes and forms.

Another delightful diary is that of six-year-old Marjorie Fleming, daughter of James Fleming of Kirkcaldy. She was a great friend of Sir Walter Scott, and wrote a number of verses, but died when she was only eight.

I confess I have been very more like a little young divil than a creature, for when Isabella went upstairs to teach me religion and my multiplication and to be good, and all my other lessons, I stamped with my foot and threw my new hat which she had made on the ground, and was sulky and was dreadfully passionate, but she never whiped me but said, " Marjorie, go into another room and think what a great crime you are

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committing, letting your temper git the better of you." But I went so sulkily that the Devil got the better of me. I am now going to tell you the horrible and wretched plague that my multiplication gives me. You can't conceive it. The most Devilish thing is 8 times 8 and 7 times 7. It is what Nature itself can't endure.

Queen Victoria kept a diary every day for seventy years, and it filled over a hundred volumes. She wrote this, at the age of thirteen, as she was driving from London to the North of England in a carriage over a hundred years ago :—

Wed., Aug. 1st.

20 minutes to 9. We have just changed horses at Barnet.

5 minutes past half past nine. We have just changed horses at St. Albans.

A quarter to 11. We have just changed horses at Dunstable.

12 minutes to 12. We have just changed horses at Brick Hill.

19 minutes to 1. We have just changed horses at Stony Stratford.

A quarter past 3. We have just changed horses at Daventry.

1 minute to 4. We have just changed horses at Dunchurch.

And here is an extract from a most moving diary, that of Captain Scott. Captain Scott and his companions reached the South Pole on January 18th, 1912, only to find that a Norwegian Expedition had got there first. The party's march homeward was dogged by ill-luck and bad weather, all of this being recorded in the diary in a spirit of quiet and uncomplaining heroism. At last (about twelve days after the date of the following extract) they could go no

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further. You can see this diary, opened at the last page, in a case in the British Museum.

Friday, March 16 or Saturday 17th. Lost track of dates, but think the last is correct. . .

Tragedy all along the line. At lunch, the day before yesterday, poor Titus Oates said he couldn't go on ; he proposed we should leave him in his sleeping-bag. That we could not do, and we induced him to come on, on the afternoon march. In spite of its awful nature for him he struggled on and we made a few miles. At night he was worse and we knew the end had come.

Should this be found I want these facts recorded. Oates' last thoughts were of his Mother, but immediately before he took pride in thinking that his regiment would be pleased with the bold way in which he met his death. We can testify to his bravery. He has borne intense suffering for weeks without complaint, and to the very last was able and willing to discuss outside subjects. He did not—would not—give up hope till the very end. He was a brave soul.

This was the end. He slept through the night before last, hoping not to wake ; but he woke in the morning—yesterday. It was blowing a blizzard. He said, "I am just going outside and may be some time." He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since.

A number of writers have adopted the diary form in fiction. Perhaps one of the most successful specimens in recent years is that by "Cleone Knox," called "The Diary of a Young Lady of Fashion, 1764-65."

March 3rd.

This morning had a vastly unpleasant interview with my Father. Last night, Mr. Ancaster, who is the indiscreetest young man alive, was seized suddenly while riding home along the shore with the desire to say good

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night to me. He climbed the wall, the postern gate being locked at that late hour, and had the Boldness to attempt to climb the ivy below my window ; while but half way up the Poor Impudent young man fell. (If he hadn't Lord knows what would have happened for I am terribly caught by the Handsome Wretch.) As ill luck would have it Papa and Ned, who were conversing in the library, looked out at that moment and saw him lying prostrate on the ground !

No need to describe the scene that followed. My father it seems thinks me guilty of Indiscretion and Immodesty, though why I don't know, for I was sound asleep the whole time and never heard so much as an Oath (and I dare swear there were plenty flying around !) My father said some mighty unkind things to me this morning and I wept loudly for more than Half an Hour. . . .

March 9th.

Keep to my room to avoid the sour glances that are cast at me if I venture below. My father as grim as death will not say a word to me. Ned puts on monstrosously Virtuous Prudish Airs. In short I am made to feel I am in disgrace. . . .

March 6th.

This morning Betsy, looking very sly, brought me a Note from Mr. A., vowing Eternal Devotion and breathing horrible Vengeance against my hard hearted parent and Ned.

It seems that Mr. A. has entirely spoilt his Crimson Plush Suit, which is all Muddied and Filthy from his lying on the damp ground. Why he was riding in his best suit he alone can explain. Did he expect I should be so foolish as to admit him at that hour of the night ?

At all events he holds my poor Charms responsible for this damage, and vows that nothing but a kiss will compensate him !

My father came in while I was reading it, which made me very confused. Dropped it on the fire but he gave me a suspicious glance.

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Barbellion.
Lost Diaries. Maurice Baring.
The Diaries of Captain Scott.

CHAPTER II

LETTERS

Writing to Friends and Enemies

Do you like writing letters? Most of us, when we are young, never seem to know quite how to begin or what to say. I can remember spending hours composing such things as :

DEAR AUNT,

Thank you for the present. The weather is very fine here. I hope you are having good weather. I have had lots of presents.

With love,

PETRE.

In other words, we behave as awkwardly in writing as we do in conversation when we meet strangers. When we grow older and have something to write about we often don't write letters because we are afraid of being dull. And that is a very good thing to be afraid of. But the queer thing is that the people who are afraid of being dull seldom are, while the people who think that they are thrillingly interesting are often the most tedious.

Before we go into the matter of deciding what is a good and what is a bad letter, it is just as well to know exactly what a letter is.

A diary is something that you write every day to yourself. A letter is something you want to say to

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someone who isn't there. It is, in fact, a conversation on paper.

"Your letters," wrote Lord Chesterfield to his son, who was a bad letter writer, "are exceedingly laconic, and neither answer my desires nor the purpose of letters, which should be *familiar conversations between absent friends*, particular accounts of yourself and of your lesser transactions. When you write to me suppose yourself talking freely with me by the fireside. You would naturally mention the incidents of the day, as, where you had been, whom you had seen, what you thought of them. Tell me of any new persons and characters that you meet with in company and add your own observations upon them ; in short let me see more of you in your letters."

That is exactly what a letter is meant to do, to let the person to whom you write see more of you ; to make them feel that, although they may be a thousand miles away, they are meeting your friends, going with you on your various expeditions, and sharing with you your joys and disappointments.

Therefore letters can be about anything or they can be about nothing. Two things they must not be. They must not be laconic, that is, short in the sense of being almost sulky, and they must not be dull.

It isn't enough to write down what happens in the first words that occur to you. You must hunt for the words which will make just the right picture in your friend's mind. Supposing that you are going to describe the place where you are spending a holiday, you might, after having told your friend about the house, say : "It is in a pretty garden." That is both laconic and dull. It certainly lets your friend know there is a garden, but that is about all.

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Now this is much better :—

The front windows of the house look out onto a long sloping lawn, at the bottom of which, but hidden by a tall holly hedge, is the main road. On the left is an old red-brick wall with pear trees trained against it (the pears are nearly ripe) and a gateway leading into the kitchen-garden. On the other side of the lawn is a huge oak tree, the lower branches of which make splendid hammocks for a hot day.

That certainly doesn't pretend to be an exhaustive description of the garden, but it gives your friend an opportunity of visualising how pleasant it is, and if he happens to be living in a particularly smoky town he would certainly want to be in it. And so that part of your letter would not be, for him, dull.

As I have said before, the subject of your letter need not be anything in particular.

Suppose you have a frightful cold. Well, why not describe that? But don't describe it in such a way as to make your friend feel as wretched as you are. This is how Charles Lamb described his bad cold :—

Did you ever have a very bad cold? This has been for many weeks my lot, and my excuse! My fingers drag heavily over this paper, and to my thinking it is three and twenty furlongs from here to the end of this half-sheet.

I have not a thing to say; nothing is of more importance than another. I am flatter than a pancake; emptier than a judge's wig when the head is in it; duller than a country stage when the actors are off it; I inhale suffocation; I cannot distinguish veal from mutton; nothing interests me. If you told me the world will be at an end tomorrow, I should just say "Will it?" I have not will enough to dot my i's, much less to comb my eyebrows. My hand writes, not I, from

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habit, as chickens run about a little when their heads are off. O for a vigorous fit of gout, colic, toothache—an earwig in my ear, a fly in my eye, but this apathy, this death.

Now the first thing to notice about that letter is that it is not laconic. Exactly the opposite. What is more, it is good-humoured, fresh and very entertaining. It states exactly what we all feel like when we have a bad cold, but it states it in a way that we probably never thought of. It makes a very unpleasant thing appear to be a great joke.

Letter-writing is just as much of an art as painting. Instead of splashing colours on to canvas with brushes, and arranging the splashes in a certain way to make a picture, you select, arrange, and combine words to make what can be an equally vivid picture of the thoughts and ideas in your head, on a sheet of writing-paper.

I have said that ordinary letters should not be laconic. There are times when the whole strength of a letter lies in its brevity. Here is a letter from Queen Elizabeth to Dr. Cox, Bishop of Ely :—

PROUD PRELATE,—You know what you were before I made you what you are now. If you do not immediately comply with my request, I will unfrock you, by God !

ELIZABETH.

Perhaps a hate-letter should always be short and to the point. Here is one from Sir Philip Sidney to his father's secretary :—

MR. MOLYNEUX,—Few words are best. My letters to my father have come to the eyes of some. Neither can I condemn any but you for it. If it be so, you have

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played the very knave with me, and so I will make you know if I have good proof of it.

But that for so much as is past. For that is to come, I assure you before God, that if ever I know you to do so much as read any letter that I write to my father without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you. And trust to it for I speak in earnest.

In the meantime, farewell.

Few words are certainly best in some kinds of letters. Here is one from a commercial traveller who had stayed away from work without leave, and wasn't sure whether he was going to get the sack or not :—

Dear Firm, am I still with you ?

The best begging letter I ever got began :—

DEAR MR. MAIS,—Here is a pin. . . .

The next best began :—

DEAR MR. MAIS,—I promise never to write to you again.

It is a good thing both in begging-letters, demand-letters and hate-letters not to mince matters, but to go straight to the point.

“ Dear Son,” wrote Mrs. Foote to her son, the famous actor, “ I am in prison for debt ; come and assist your loving mother,” and she got this reply : “ Dear Mother, so am I ; which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother.”

To-day, when you want to sell or buy something, or to secure a job, the best way is to say so politely,

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quickly, and without any trimmings. A good letter ought to be like a good dive, neatly in, no splash, soon out.

Now suppose you are applying for a job by letter. Probably hundreds of others are applying for it too. All of you have probably got more or less the same qualifications. But what you don't share with any of the others is your own personality, and that is what you have got to convey in your letter. It is rather like sending your photograph by television.

If your letter is concise, clear, and to the point, saying exactly what you can do and what you have done in the past, your chances of gaining an interview are infinitely greater than if you ramble through four pages of stereotyped phrases.

“ Say what you have to say, and stop,” is the first rule of all good writing. People may tell you that every business letter should begin on these lines :—

With reference to your kind favour of the 13th ultimo, we have great pleasure to inform you . . .

Don't believe them. That sort of rubbish is out of date. The modern business letter says what it has to say clearly, shortly, and without beating about the bush. There is a danger, of course, of going to the other extreme and being merely impertinent. A large number of circular letters advertising vacuum-cleaners and soap-powders share this fault :—

DEAR HOUSEWIFE,

Are you quite sure that your hubby and the kiddies are not missing something because you do not use “ Bongo ” ? . . .

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This is as effective in keeping custom away as unbalanced advertising on the air.

You can't start too early trying to get your personality down on to paper. You can begin, if you like, by practising short, pithy, laconic hate-letters to imaginary people who pry over your shoulder, don't return things you lend them, don't turn up punctually, and so on.

And if you write letters of that kind to real people who have annoyed you, you can get rid of a lot of bad temper that way. But it is usually best to tear up the letter when you are feeling better, for half the hate-letters that are written and sent through the post sound silly when they are opened and read in cold blood.

Here is a hate-letter from Dean Swift to Pope that gives a splendid insight into Dean Swift's outlook on life :—

. . . I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities ; and all my love is towards individuals.

For instance I hate the tribe of lawyers ; but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one.

It is so with physicians. I will not speak of my own trade, soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest.

But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years (but do not tell), and so I shall go on until I have done with them.

And from the following extract from a letter from Lord Chesterfield to his son, I think you will gain an accurate picture of one side of the character of this eighteenth-century statesman.

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Dancing is in itself a very trifling, silly thing ; but it is one of those established follies to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform ; and then they should be able to do it well. And though I would not have you a dancer, yet when you do dance, I would have you dance well ; as I would have you do everything you do well. There is no one thing so trifling, but which (if it is to be done at all) ought to be done well ; and I have often told you that I wish you even played at pitch, and cricket, better than any boy at Westminster. For instance, dress is a very foolish thing ; and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed, according to his rank and way of life ; and it is so far from being a disparagement to any man's understanding, that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those whom he lives with ; the difference in this case between a man of sense and a fop is, that the fop values himself upon his dress ; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time that he knows he must not neglect it. There are a thousand foolish customs of this kind which not being criminal, must be complied with, and even cheerfully, by men of sense. Diogenes the cynic was a wise man for despising them ; but a fool for showing it. Be wiser than other people if you can ; but do not tell them so.

As an exercise and a means of sweetening one's temper, hate-letters are excellent, but you will enjoy yourself far more by writing *friendly* letters, which are not short or laconic.

What you've got to aim at is to give your friend the impression that there is nothing in the world you want to do so much as just to go on talking on paper to him or her. That is how the best letters are written, by lying back in an easy chair, folding our legs and settling down to a long talk to our best invisible friend.

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That is why love-letters, like all good letters, are usually so long, for the one who is writing doesn't want to stop, and the one who is going to read it also doesn't want it to stop. He pours himself out to her, and she pours herself out to him, for they both know that what each writes is going to be seen by one pair of eyes only. "I beseech you," wrote a girl called Margery Brews to her lover, some 460 years ago, "I beseech you that this bill be not seen of none earthly creature save only yourself."

Some of the most beautiful letters in the English language are the love-letters written by Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple. Here is one dated Sunday, March 5th, 1654 :—

. . . Dear, shall we ever be so happy, think you ? Ah ! I dare not hope it ; yet 'tis not want of love gives me these fears. No, in earnest, I think (nay, I am sure) I love you more than ever, and 'tis that only gives me these despairing thoughts, when I consider how small a proportion of happiness is allowed in this world, and how great mine would be in a person for whom I have a passionate kindness and who has the same for me. As it is infinitely above what I can deserve, and more than God Almighty usually allots to the best people, I can find nothing in reason but seems to be against me ; and, methinks, 'tis as vain in me to expect it as 'twould be to hope I might be a queen (if that were really as desirable a thing as 'tis thought to be) ; and it is just it should be so. We complain of this world and the variety of crosses and afflictions it abounds in, and yet for all this who is weary on't (more than in discourse), who thinks with pleasure of leaving it, or preparing for the next ? We see old folks that have outlived all the comforts of life, desire to continue it, and nothing can wean us from the folly of preferring a mortal being, subject to great infirmities and unavoidable decays,

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before an immortal one, and all the glories that are promised with it. Is not this very like preaching? Well, 'tis too good for you ; you shall have no more on't. I am afraid you are not mortified enough for such discourses to work upon, though I am not of my brother's opinion neither (that you have no religion in you) ; in earnest, I never took anything he ever said half so ill, as nothing sure is so great an injury, it must suppose one to be a devil in human shape. Oh me ! now I am speaking of religion, let me ask you is not his name Bagshaw that you say rails on love and women ? Because I heard one t'other day speaking of him and commending his wit, but withal said he was a perfect atheist ; if so I can allow him to hate us, and love, which sure has something of divine in it, since God requires it of us. I am coming into my preaching vein again : what think you ? were it not a good way of preferment as the times are ? If you advise me to it I'll venture. The woman at Somerset House was cried up mightily ; think on't ;

Dear, I am yours,

DOROTHY OSBORNE.

It is only when you think that you are not being overheard or overlooked that you can really be yourself and write as Dorothy Osborne wrote. She is not acting before an audience, or making a public speech. She is being herself. Here she is again, this time replying to a question :—

. . . You ask me how I pass my time here. I can give you a perfect account, not only of what I do for the present, but what I am likely to do this seven years if I stay here so long. I rise in the morning reasonably early, and before I am ready I go round the house till I am weary of that, and then into the garden till it grows too hot for me. I then think of making me ready ; and when that's done I go into my father's chamber ; from thence to dinner, where my cousin Molle and I sit in

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great state in a room and at a table that would hold a great many more. After dinner we sit and talk till Mr. P. comes in question, and then I am gone. The heat of the day is spent in reading or working ; and about six or seven o'clock I walk out into a common that lies hard by the house, where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads ; I go to them, and compare their voices and beauty to some ancient shepherdesses that I have read of, and find a vast difference there ; but, trust me, I think these are as innocent as those could be. I talk to them, and find they want nothing to make them the happiest people in the world but the knowledge that they are so. Most commonly, while we are in the middle of our discourse, one looks about her, and spies her cows going into the corn, and then away they all run as if they had wings at their heels. I that am not so nimble stay behind, and when I see them driving home their cattle think it is time for me to return too. When I have supped I go into the garden, and so to the side of a small river that runs by it, where I sit down and wish you with me (you had best say this is not kind, neither). In earnest, it is a pleasant place, and would be more so to me if I had your company, as I sit there sometimes till I am lost with thinking ; and were it not for some cruel thoughts of the crossness of my fortune, that will not let me sleep there, I should forget there were such a thing to be done as going to bed.

Could there be a more perfect description of a day in a girl's life ? Not a line of it is dull, and it is full of quiet humour. The writer's personality comes through so strongly, that reading her words all these years after her death, makes us long to meet her and talk with her.

When you are writing a good letter, therefore, you must be writing for one person only. You are not dressed up, as it were, to address an audience. You

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are more likely to be undressed ; the best letters are written in bed. This may sound as if it were a lazy sort of writing. It is not. Your friend has as much right to demand that you take trouble to entertain him as a public audience has.

The difference is that with the friend you can be much more intimate. You can rove from one subject to another, just as people do in conversation. As Lord Chesterfield said : “ A letter is really only conversation, but it must be good conversation.” What he meant was that it must not be a vain repetition of : “ Well, did you ever ? ” and “ Oo-er, just fancy that now.” You can’t afford time to blather or froth at the mouth either in speech or on paper.

Write about what interests you, and you won’t be dull. And if your first attempt appears to be nonsense, you can always tear it up and start again. See how Charles Lamb makes a really good letter out of a tiny, unimportant incident that interested him. He is writing to Coleridge :—

DEAR C,—It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well—they are interesting creatures at a certain age—what a pity such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon ! You had all some of the crackling—and brain sauce—did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis ? Did the eyes come away kindly with no Œdipean avulsion ? Was the crackling the colour of the ripe pomegranate ? Had you no complement of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire ? Did you flesh maiden teeth in it ? Not that I sent the pig, or can form the remotest guess what part Owen could play in the business. I never knew him give

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anything away in my life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig, after all, was meant for me ; but at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things I could never think of sending away. Teals, widgeons, snipes, barn-door fowl, ducks, geese—your tame villatic things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeons, fresh or pickled, your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self-extended ; but pardon me if I stop somewhere—where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity—there my friends (or any good man) may command me ; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs of remorse I ever felt was when a child—when my kind old aunt had strained her pocket-strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plum-cake upon me. In my way home through the Borough, I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant, but thereabouts—a look-beggar, not a verbal petitioner ; and in the coxcombry of taught-charity I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in all the pride of an evangelical peacock, when of a sudden my old aunt's kindness crossed me—the sum it was to her—the pleasure she had a right to expect that I—not the old imposter—should take in eating her cake—the cursed ingratitude by which, under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like—and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy, and proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated, consigned to dung-hill with the ashes of that unseasonable pauper.

But when providence, who is better to us all than our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and

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my fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor's purpose.

Yours (short of pig) to command in everything,
C. L.

I seem to have come back to my starting-point. Letters can be about anything, or they can be about nothing. There is material for about twenty letters in a single walk if you keep your eyes open.

So far I have given you specimens that do not describe any particularly important incident, but are conversations between friends. Naturally, when something exciting has happened to you personally, there is plenty to write about.

Here is the family chaplain of the Squire of Okeover in Staffordshire, writing to his master of a visit of stragglers from Bonnie Prince Charlie's army :—

We have had a dreadful time the last week. Upon Tuesday night we had five lay with us, and upon Friday night, as they returned from Derby, four lay with us, and about seven o'clock at night came three horsemen and said they wanted armour, and plundered the house and stables and barns and the church. They have taken your best saddle trimmed with gold lace, and furniture belonging to it, and your lady's bridle, and two other saddles, and two other bridles, and two pairs of boots, and upon Tuesday the young mare, and upon Saturday morning the grey pad (both at Christopher Tomkinson's), and they have taken all your horses at Okeover. Upon Saturday morning, after they were gone, came three ruffians, and said they wanted money, and took from me eighteenpence and my silver tobacco box, and picked the servants' pockets of their money ; they killed none of us, but threatened us much.

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I have already showed you a letter from Charles Lamb at his wittiest, and now I am going to give you one from him to Coleridge, written on a very different occasion. The pig letter is a piece of airy frothiness meant to amuse the reader ; this one is an agonised cry from a heart in need of sympathy :—

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines ; My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of our own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses ; I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgement, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris, of the Bluecoat School, has been very kind to us, and we have no other friend ; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me “ the former things are passed away,” and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us in His keeping.

Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please, but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

From the foregoing you have gathered that letters can be about anything or nothing ; that they can be gay or tragic. Lewis Carroll, besides writing

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serious letters, was a past-master at nonsense letters. Here is one to a young friend :—

CHRIST CHURCH,
OXFORD,
March 8th, 1880

MY DEAR ADA,

(Isn't that your short name ? " Adelaide " is all very well, but you see, when one is *dreadfully* busy one hasn't time to write such long words—particularly when it takes one half an hour to remember how to spell it—and even then one has to go and get a dictionary to see if one has spelt it right, and of course the dictionary is in another room, at the top of a high bookcase—where it has been for months and months—and has got all covered with dust. So one has got to get a duster first of all, and nearly choke oneself in dusting it—and when one *has* made out at last which is dictionary and which is dust, *even* then there is the job of remembering which end of the alphabet " A " comes—for one feels pretty certain it isn't in the *middle*—then one has to go and wash one's hands before turning over the leaves—for they've got so thick with dust, one hardly knows them by sight—and, as likely as not, the soap is lost, and the jug is empty, and there's no towel, and one has to spend hours and hours in finding things—and perhaps after all, one has to go off to the shop to buy a new cake of soap. So, with all this bother, I hope you won't mind my writing it short and saying, " My dear Ada ")—You said in your letter you would like a likeness of me ; so here it is, and I hope you will like it. I won't forget to call the next time but one I'm in Wallingham.

Your very affectionate friend,
LEWIS CARROLL.

Perhaps you have not written letters up to the present, because you have no one to write to. Your father and mother, relatives and friends, all live near you, and you know nobody at a distance who

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would like to hear from you. That need not stop you. Plenty of letters have been written to imaginary persons or things, and have given the writers just as much pleasure as the more ordinary sort of letter.

When I broadcast to schools on this subject, I asked the children to write to me, or send me a letter written to an imaginary character.

This is one that came to me from a school in Manchester :—

3RD RECESS,
CORAL REEF,
THE OTHER SHORE,
ATLANTA SEATY,
Sundown.

DEAR SAMMY SNAIL,

As I could not escort you home last night, owing to the fact that we were already ten minutes late (you know the reason why) and you would not join the dance, I was rather anxious for your safety ; so very many large human feet traverse that road and you might easily have been squashed. However, I will not harp on such morbid subjects, but will tell you of the very jolly evening we spent. I am sure by the time I have finished you will be biting your ears with envy. If you are, there is a ticket for the next dance enclosed. On it are full particulars of what you must do and how to do it. But I must warn you not to make very ceremonious preparations for it in case there is not a full moon or tide that night. Mr. Percival Porpoise, our Master of Ceremonies, was not quite sure whether he heard Old Salt, the Fisherman, telling his friend the Skipper that there would be a full moon on Friday or Saturday night. If there is not one on the chosen night the dance will be cancelled.

However, I will begin to tell you of last night's revels or you will not be so eager to join us.

When you told me you definitely intended returning

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home, I could not, of course, arrive at the dance alone (that is not done at *our* affairs), so I asked Mr. P. Porpoise, M.C. (the one who was treading on my tail) if I might join his party. He very kindly allowed me to do so.

Tommy Turtle was acting as doorkeeper, and informed us that the dance had already begun, upon which my friend Percival grunted his disapproval—he could not very well say anything as we had been hurrying, hoping the revellers would await his arrival, and the poor old fellow had no wind left. As soon as we set foot on the shingle he boomed forth majestically—with long pauses in which to get his breath back.

“Friends—(long pause)—I have—(another long pause)—arrived! (A deep breath of satisfaction)—The dance—will now—BEGIN.” After which magnificent speech he sat down with rather undignified suddenness, which we pretended not to notice.

If Percival hoped to impress the company with his speech he was doomed to disappointment—for after a momentary pause the next lobster was thrown out to sea. Eventually (with much hopping on our fins and tails in the meantime) my turn came, and Walter Walrus with one mournful glance in the direction of the Other Shore he heaved me out to sea. Whew! what a sensation that was. With my fins and tail flapping in the breeze, I sailed through the air with great speed. And then began the rapid nose-dive into the ocean. Splash! I was in. Then began the race to the Other Shore—which was already in sight; from that you can imagine what a heave Wally Walrus gave me. The sea was more exhilaratingly cold than usual—though it is never so cold as I would like it to be. After a quick tail-spin and a plunge—almost to the bottom, I began to swim in earnest and was among the first to arrive at The Other Shore, where all the Shrimp Family were awaiting us with a grand meal of Sea Slugs. After which sumptuous repast we retired to our respective homes for the night. And here I am, writing to you from my hotel, which is

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most comfortable—right on the Boulevard in a very respectable quarter (no Sea Urchins playing at the street corners, you know !) although I do not think it would suit you, being under water. But you could soon be fixed up in a crab's hole—though, personally, I cannot imagine how you breathe or sleep peacefully in a place like that. However, tastes differ and all that . . . ! And you are welcome to your strange abode.

And now I must bid you farewell as I hear voices from without which remind me it must be almost time for the return dance to begin, so I will stop now ; hoping to see you at our next " hop," also hoping (most fervently) I have not bored you with this (it seems to me) extremely long letter.

Yours,
WILLY WHITING.

P.S.—The smudge at the end of the page was made by me trying to knock a sea-spider from off the paper. They are shaped rather like this ★. You must let me introduce you to one next time I see you, they clean shoes wonderfully.

W. W.

Imagination can enter as much into a letter as into any novel. In fact, I suggest that everyone should have a shot at this sort of thing. There's plenty of fun to be got out of deciding who the letter is to be written by, and to whom it is addressed. For example : Write a letter from a window-cleaner to an engine-driver, suggesting the advantages of swapping jobs, or a letter from any dog you know to any other dog you know, giving an account of a day out with you.

This is a good way to get inside the skins of people and things different from yourself, and to live about twenty lives instead of one. Let your imagination

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rip. No one was ever hurt by exercising his imagination.

Don't be afraid of expressing your likes and dislikes in these letters of the imagination or in any other kind. If there are things you fear, such as passing cows in a field, great heights, or dark passages at night, describe your experiences with them, and you will find that they are not nearly as bad when you put them down on paper. If there are things you hate, sarcasm, meanness and so on, describe your experience of those things too, and it may help put a stop to them, especially in yourself.

But most of all, when you like things, don't be afraid of telling your friends so on paper. Don't be afraid of telling anyone that the starry sky last night made you want to cry, or that the sight of a kingfisher darting up the stream made you want to sing.

Describe in your letters the lovely sights and sounds and smells that you come across in your life, so that your friends may share the fun that you get out of being alive.

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A FURTHER SELECTION OF LETTERS

I am giving you a few more examples of what I think are good letters.

The first is the earliest existing Greek letter.

Carry to the Potter's Market, and deliver to Nausias or Thrasyacles or my son.

Mnesiergus sends his love to all at home and hopes this may find them well as it leaves him.

Please send me a rug, either a sheepskin or a goatskin, as cheap as you can get it, and not with the hairs on, and some strong shoe-soles ; I will pay some time.

The next is from Richard Cely, the younger, to his brother George, and is dated May 1482. It describes Richard's adventures in search of a wife.

The same day that I come to Northleach on a Sunday before matins from Burforde Wylliam Mydwyntter welcomed me, and in our communication he asked me if I were in any way of marriage. I told him nay, and he informed me that there was a young gentlewoman whose father his name is Lemeryke, and her mother is dead, and she shall dispend by her mother £40 a year, as they say in that country, and her father is the greatest ruler and richest man in that country, and there have been great gentlemen to see her and would have her. And ere matins was done Wylliam Mydwyntter had moved this matter to the greatest man about the gentleman Lemeryke, and he said and informed the foresaid of all the matter and the young gentlewoman both. And the Saturday after Wylliam Mydwyntter went to London. . . . When I had packed at Campden, and Wylliam Mydwyntter parted, I came to Northleach again to make an end of packing, and on Sunday next after, the same man that Wylliam Mydwyntter break first to, came to me and telled me that he had broken to his master

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according as Mydwyntter desired him, and he said his master was right well pleased therewith : and the same man said to me, if I would tarry May day I should have a sight of the young gentlewoman, and I said I would tarry with a good will. And the same day her father should a'sitten at Northleach for the King, but he sent one of his clerks, and rode himself to Winchcombe. And to matins the same day come the young gentlewoman and her mother-in-law (stepmother), and I and Wylliam Bretten were saying matins when they come into church. And when matins was done, they went to a kinswoman of the young gentlewoman, and I sent to them a pottle of white romnay, and they took it thankfully, for they had come a mile afoot that morning. And when mass was done, I come and welcomed them, and kissed them, and they thanked me for the wine, and prayed me to come to dinner with them ; and I excused me, and they made me promise to drink with them after dinner. And I sent them to dinner a gallon wine, and they sent me a heronsew roast. And after dinner I come and drank with them, and took Wylliam Bretten with me ; and we had right good communication, and the person pleased me well ; as by the first communication she is young, little and well-favoured and witty, and the country speaks much good by her. Sir, all this matter abideth the coming of her father to London, that we may understand what sum he will depart with, and how he likes me ; he will be here within three weeks. I pray send me a letter how ye think by this matter.

I have already given specimens of Lord Chesterfield's letters. This one is giving his son good advice on the subject of keeping accounts. The style may seem rather pompous at first sight, but it can be compared in some degree to the rather formal architecture of the eighteenth century. There is nothing slap-dash about it, but every word has been

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placed carefully in position like the bricks in a fine building.

As far as you can possibly, pay ready money for everything you buy, and avoid bills. Pay that money too yourself, and not through the hands of any servant, who always either stipulates poundage, or requires a present for his good word, as they call it. Where you must have bills (as for meat and drink, clothes, etc.) pay them regularly every month, and with your own hand. Never, from a mistaken economy, buy a thing you do not want, because it is cheap ; or from a silly pride, because it is dear. Keep an account in a book, of all that you receive, and of all that you pay ; for no man, who knows what he receives and what he pays, ever runs out.

I do not mean that you should keep an account of the shillings and half-crowns which you may spend in chair-hire, operas, etc. They are unworthy of the time, and of the ink that they would consume ; leave such minutiae to dull, penny-wise fellows ; but remember in economy, as well as in every other part of life, to have the proper attention to proper objects, and the proper contempt for little ones. A strong mind sees things in their true proportion ; a weak one views them through a magnifying medium, which, like the microscope, makes an elephant of a flea ; magnifies all little objects, but cannot receive great ones.

Richard Steele wrote many love-letters to his Prue. It may be unkind, but it is rather amusing to compare his letters before and after marriage.

MADAM,

It is the hardest thing in the world to be in love and yet to attend to business. As for me, all who speake to me find me out, and I must lock myself up, or other people will do it for me. A gentleman asked me this morning what news from Lisbon, and I answered she's

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exquisitely handsome. Another desired to know when I had been last at Hampton Court, I reply'd 'twill be on Tuesday come se'nnight. Prithee allow me at least to kisse your hand before that day, that my mind may be in some composure. O love !

A thousand torments dwell about thee,

Yet who would live to live without thee ?

Methinks I could write a volume to you but all the language on earth would fail in saying how much, and with what disinterested passion, I am ever yours,

RICHARD STEELE.

DEAR PRUE,

I enclose five guineas, but can't come home to dinner. Dear little woman, take care of thyself, and eat and drink cheerfully.

RICHARD STEELE.

John Keats is remembered more for his poems than for anything else, but he, too, was an excellent letter-writer. Here is a hate-letter he wrote to John Hamilton Reynolds after visiting Burns' birth-place :—

MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

. . . We went to Kirk Alloway—"a Prophet is no Prophet in his own Country." We went to the Cottage and took some Whisky. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof—they are so bad I cannot transcribe them.

The Man at the Cottage was a great Bore with his Anecdotes—I hate the rascal—his life consists of fuz, fuzzy, fuzziest. He drinks glasses five for the Quarter and twelve for the hour—he is a mahogany-faced old Jackass who knew Burns. He ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him. He calls himself "a curious old Bitch"—but he is a flat old dog—I should like to employ Caliph Vathek to kick him. O the flummery of a birthplace ! Cant ! cant ! cant !

It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache. Many a

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true word, they say, is spoken in jest—this may be because his gab hindered my sublimity : the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet. . . .

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

No collection of letters would be complete without the first that Marjorie Fleming wrote in her short life.

MY DEAR ISA,

I now sit down to answer all your kind and beloved letters which you was so good as to write to me. This is the first time I ever wrote a letter in my Life. There are a great many Girls in the Square and they cry just like a pig when we are under the painfull necessity of putting it to Death. Miss Potune a Lady of my acquaintance praises me dreadfully. I repeated something out of Dean Swift, and she said I was fit for the stage, and you may think I was primed up with majestick Pride, but upon my word I felt myselfe turn a little birsay—birsay is a word which is a word that William composed which is as you may suppose a little enraged. This horrid fat simpleton says that my Aunt is beautiful which is intirely impossible for that is not her nature.

And here, to finish, is a nonsense-letter of Sydney Smith to compare with that of Lewis Carroll :—

Oh, you little wretch ! your letter cost me fourpence. I will pull all the plums out of your puddings ; I will undress your dolls and steal their under petticoats ; you shall have no currant-jelly to your rice ; I will kiss you till you cannot see out of your eyes ; when nobody else whips you, I will do so ; I will fill you so full of sugar-plums that they shall run out of your nose and ears ; lastly, your frocks shall be so short that they shall not come below your knees.

Your loving grandfather,

SYDNEY SMITH.

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- Letters of William Cowper.
- The Gentlest Art. By E. V. Lucas.
- The Second Post. By E. V. Lucas.

CHAPTER III

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Writing About Ourselves

THE change from letter-writing to writing an autobiography is very slight.

In your diary you've been writing about yourself, in your letters you write about yourself, and now in your autobiography you go on writing about yourself. But there's a difference, and a big difference.

In your diary you write about yourself *to* yourself, an absolutely private sort of writing. In your letters you write about yourself to just one other person, a fairly private sort of writing, familiar conversation on paper. In your autobiography you write about yourself to the world. It's your first appearance in public. You have to watch your every step, for now you are inviting criticism. You are no longer making conversation. You are making a record, and you've got to be clear, just as in making a gramophone record, quite certain of what you're going to say, and make no mistakes.

You can no longer write down things just as they come into your head. You have to start arranging things in the proper order. You have to begin at the beginning. You have to learn to select. If you wrote down everything that has happened to you, or everything that has been said to you since you

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were born, you'd never get your autobiography written, and no one would want to read it if you did.

So before you start the book itself, you must begin to make notes about it, construct a sort of scaffolding on which to build it. You will have to build it room by room, chapter by chapter. Your diary will come in useful here, for it will help you to remember exciting things that happened to you which you have now forgotten all about. In fact your diary will jog your memory exactly as old photographs do. Smells come in useful in autobiography. The smell of roast chestnuts may remind you of cold November days, just as the smell of new-mown hay will remind you of the fields in June.

Only when the scaffolding is up, the notes in their order, are you ready to start. The important thing to remember about starts, whether in a race or a book, is to get quickly off the mark. You are likely to have one or two false starts, just as you do in a race, and have to come back to the starting-post again.

George Borrow, who used to roam the country with the gipsies, began his autobiography, which he calls "Lavengro," like this :—

On the 5th day of July, 1803, at East Dereham, a beautiful little town in the western division of Norfolk, I first saw the light.

Then he crossed that out, and started again like this :—

On an evening in July, in the year 1803, at East

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Dereham, a beautiful little town in a certain district of East Anglia, I first saw the light.

I don't think much of either of these starts, because "I first saw the light" is simply a round-about way of saying, "I was born," and he ought to have been more precise about the date and place.

Mr. H. G. Wells begins his autobiography like this :—

This brain of mine came into existence in a needy, shabby home in a little town called Bromley in Kent. It was one of a row of badly built houses upon a narrow section of the High Street. In front upon the ground floor was the shop, filled with crockery, china and glassware, and cricket bats, balls, stumps, nets and other cricket material.

In the scullery was a small fireplace, a copper boiler for washing, and provision cupboard, a bread-pan, a beer cask, a pump delivering water from a well into a stone sink, a space for coal, our only space for coal, beneath the wooden stairs.

That's a much better start. The only thing wrong with it is "this brain of mine," which sounds as if the rest of his body was born earlier or later. He should have said : "I was born in a needy, shabby house." It's a good idea to begin with surroundings .

Listen to this :—

The oldest thing I remember is Makerel End ; or Mackerel End as it is spelt in your old maps of Hertfordshire ; a farmhouse—delightfully situated within a gentle walk from Wheathampstead.

That was Charles Lamb. The only mistake he makes is to say, "delightfully situated," which are

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vague long words that sound like an extract from an estate-agent's advertisement.

Here is another good start, that of an autobiography of a modern adventurer named Arthur Mason. His book is called "Wide Seas and Many Lands."

My life, until I was 18, was spent on the good-sized farm of my father, on the shores of Strangford Lough. I was as wild as a buck on the hills. My mother was constantly praying for me, while my father laid heavy the lash. There was another to be reckoned with—my schoolmaster. Short and stubby he was, with a black beard and a pug nose, and eyes that were always searching for the bad that might be in a boy. I branded him one time over his heathery eyebrows with a glass ink-bottle. One day I made up a little song that went something like this :—

"I saw from the beach when the morning was shining
A barque o'er the waters move gloriously on."

Come youth, it seemed to say, come along with me. Over the seas we'll go. Up with you and away to the land where the natives white-wash their hair, and the yams grow the size of wash-tubs.

In those days bird-nest hunting was my favourite pastime. I had to count the eggs and look at their colour, and wonder why some were blue, while others were the colour of pebbles and withered grass. I was told once there was danger of a bird forsaking her nest if she knew that anyone had touched her eggs. To take the curse off the eggs, you must blow three times on your hands. I always did this, and I never found a forsaken nest.

The most unexpected opening of an autobiography is that of Benvenuto Cellini, one of the greatest liars and scoundrels who ever dared to write his own life.

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He began by saying that all upright and truthful men who have done noble things should write their lives, but not before they have turned forty. I should not wait until I was forty, if I were like him, you might deceive yourself into thinking that you are upright, truthful and noble, when you're nothing of the kind.

But his autobiography is great fun. He takes great pleasure in describing how he murders people.

There passed not a day that I did not kill some of the army without the Castle.

One day amongst others the Pope happened to walk upon the round rampart, when he saw in the public walks a Spanish colonel, who he knew by certain tokens ; and understanding that he had formerly been in his service, he said something concerning him, all the while observing him attentively. I who was above at the battery, and knew nothing of the matter, but saw a man who was employed in getting the trenches repaired, and who stood with a spear in his hand, dressed in rose-colour, began to deliberate how I should lay him flat. I took my swivel, which was almost equal to a demi-culverin, turned it round, and charged it with a good quantity of fine and coarse powder mixed, aimed it at him exactly, though he was at so great a distance that it could not be expected any effort of art should make such pieces carry so far. I fired off the gun, and hit the man exactly in the middle. He had arrogantly placed his sword before him in a sort of Spanish bravado ; but the ball of my piece struck against his sword, and the man was seen severed into two pieces. The Pope, who did not dream of any such thing, was highly delighted and surprised at what he saw, as well because he thought it impossible that such a piece could carry so far, as that he could not conceive how the man could be cut into two pieces. Upon this he sent for me, and made an inquiry into the whole affair. I told him the art I had used to

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fire in that manner ; but as to the man's being split into two pieces, neither he nor I was able to account for it. So, falling upon my knees, I entreated his Holiness to absolve me from the guilt of homicide, as likewise from other crimes which I had committed in that Castle in the service of the Church. The Pope, lifting up his hands, and making the sign of the cross over me, said that he blessed me, and gave me his absolution for all the homicides I had ever committed, or ever should commit, in the service of the Apostolic Church.

Here is another start, that of a novel by E. J. Trelawny, published in 1831, called "Adventures of a Younger Son."

The book is partly autobiographical, and is about a wild Byronic character, warped in youth by the harshness of his father, who deserts from the navy, becomes a pirate, and has many exciting adventures in the East.

I came into the world branded and denounced as a vagrant. I was an unusually boring awkward boy.

One day I was perched on an apple tree, throwing apples down to my brother, when our father came on us suddenly. Every trifle put him in a passion. Commanding us to follow him, he walked rapidly through the grounds into the road, without entering the house. He led us towards the town, and through the streets, without uttering a syllable, a distance of four miles. Arriving at the end of the town my father stalked to a walled and dreary building. We followed up a long passage ; he rung at a prison-looking entrance-gate, crossing a dark hall we entered a small parlour. In ten minutes entered a dapper little man, carrying his head high in the air, with large bright silver buckles in his shoes, a stock buttoned tightly round his neck, spectacles and powdered. With repeated bows to my father he requested him to take a chair. There was an impatience and

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rapidity in everything he said, which indicated that he liked doing and not talking.

"Sir," said my father, "will you undertake the charge of these ungovernable vagabonds? I can do nothing with them. This fellow" (pointing to me) "will come to the gallows if you do not scourge the devil out of him."

With this my father got up, bowed, and without taking any notice of us, went out of the room. Torn from my home, without notice or preparation, delivered in bitter words, an outcast, unto the power of a stranger, and a minute afterwards to find myself in a strip of ground dedicated to play, but by its high walls, more like a prison-yard, surrounded by 30 or 40 boys, from five to fifteen, making comments and asking questions.

Luckily very few of us have such harsh parents or such schoolmasters.

Here's another good start. This is Siegfried Sassoon's :

My childhood was a queer and not altogether happy one. I was shy and solitary. My father and mother died before I was capable of remembering them. I was an only child entrusted to the care of an unmarried aunt who was no longer young and lived with two Persian cats.

As a consequence of my loneliness, I created in my childish day-dreams an ideal companion who became much more of a reality than such unfriendly boys as I encountered at Christmas parties.

I remember a party given by my aunt, in the course of which someone locked me in a cupboard during a game of hide and seek. I was so glad to escape that I kept as quiet as a mouse for the best part of an hour, crouching on the floor of that camphor-smelling cupboard.

Well, that's enough of beginnings. Without any

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shilly-shallying you let your audience know who you are, where you were born, the sort of place your home was, and what your parents were like.

Then comes the description of your childhood ; and here diaries are invaluable, for you can reconstruct events and place them in their proper order. Memory alone is an uncertain thing.

Remember, in an autobiography, what is wanted are your reactions to people and things ; your impressions of your surroundings ; and, if possible, what you thought about life in general at the period of which you are writing. It is not enough to make bare statements of fact such as : “ When I was fourteen I went to live in Philadelphia,” and to leave it at that. Thousands of persons have gone to live in Philadelphia, and it is up to you to make the fact of your personal arrival in Philadelphia of absorbing interest to anyone who reads about it.

See how Benjamin Franklin, who became Postmaster-General of the United States, does it :—

I have been the more particular in this description of my journey, and shall be so of my first entry into that city, that you may in your mind compare such unlikely beginnings with the figure I have since made there. I was in my working dress, my best clothes being to come round by sea. I was dirty from my journey ; my pockets were stuffed out with shirts and stockings, and I knew no soul nor where to look for lodging. I was fatigued with travelling, rowing, and want of rest, I was very hungry ; and my whole stock of cash consisted of a Dutch dollar, and about a shilling in copper. The latter I gave the people of the boat for my passage, who at first refused it, on account of my rowing ; but I insisted on their taking it, a man being sometimes more generous when he has but little money than when he

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has plenty, perhaps through fear of being thought to have but little.

Then I walked up the street, gazing about till near the market-house I met a boy with bread. I had made many a meal on bread, and, inquiring where he got it, I went immediately to the baker's he directed me to, in Second-street, and asked for bisket, intending such as we had in Boston ; but they, it seems, were not made in Philadelphia. Then I asked for a three-penny loaf, and was told they had none such. So not considering or knowing the difference of money, and the greater cheapness nor the names of his bread, I bade him give me three-penny worth of any sort. He gave me, accordingly, three great puffy rolls. I was surprised at the quantity, but took it, and, having no room in my pockets, walked off with a roll under each arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market-street as far as Fourth-street, passing by the door of Mr. Read, my future wife's father ; when she, standing at the door, saw me, and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. Then I turned and went down Chesnut-street and part of Walnut-street, eating my roll all the way, and, coming round, found myself again at Market-street wharf, near the boat I came in, to which I went for a draught of the river water ; and, being filled with one of my rolls, gave the other two to a woman and her child that came down the river in the boat with us, and were waiting to go farther.

Thus refreshed, I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way. I joined them, and thereby was led into the great meeting-house of the Quakers near the market. I sat down among them, and, after looking round awhile and hearing nothing said, being very drowsy through labour and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep and continued so till the meeting broke up, when one was kind enough to rouse me. This was, therefore, the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia.

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It is all those little details about his dress, his difficulties at the baker's and so on, that makes this extract so readable. One gets such a clear picture of this boy wandering, travel-stained, through the streets that there is certainly no need for illustrations to help the prose.

All through this Franklin extract there is the feeling of a sun-drenched, peaceful, Quaker city. How different is the impression given by de Quincey in his description of his London boyhood. Just as vividly can one see the gaunt house in Greek Street, and the pinched face of the little waif he found there.

Towards nightfall I went down to Greek Street, and found, on taking possession of my new quarters that the house already contained one single inmate—a poor, friendless child, apparently ten years old ; but she seemed hunger-bitten ; and sufferings of that sort often make children look older than they are. From this forlorn child I learned that she had slept and lived there alone for some time before I came ; and great joy the poor creature expressed when she found that I was in future to be her companion through the hours of darkness. The house could hardly be called large—that is, it was not large on each separate storey ; but, having four storeys in all, it was large enough to impress vividly the sense of its echoing loneliness ; and, from the want of furniture, the noise of the rats made a prodigious uproar on the staircase and hall ; so that, amidst the real fleshly ills of cold and hunger, the forsaken child had found leisure to suffer still more from the self-created one of ghosts. Against these enemies I could promise her protection ; human companionship was in itself protection ; but of other and more needful aid I had, alas ! little to offer. We lay upon the floor, with a bundle of law-papers for a pillow, but with no other covering than a large horseman's cloak ; afterwards,

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however, we discovered in a garret an old sofa-cover, a small piece of rug, and some fragments of other articles, which added a little to our comfort. The poor child crept close to me for warmth, and for security against her ghostly enemies. When I was not more than usually ill, I took her into my arms, so that, in general, she was tolerably warm, and often slept when I could not.

Both the foregoing extracts are ideal specimens of autobiographical style. The writers knew exactly what they had to say, and they said it in the fewest possible words. Superfluity of words is irritating at any time, but never more so than in autobiography.

Write, then, as much as you like about the small things of your life as well as the great, but write simply. Here is Henry David Thoreau telling of the building of his house :—

Near the end of March 1845 I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye ; but I returned it sharper than I received it. It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, covered with pine woods, through which I looked out on the pond, and a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up. The ice in the pond was not yet dissolved, though there were some open spaces, and it was all dark-coloured and saturated with water. . . .

I hewed the main timbers six inches square, most of the studs on two sides only, and the rafters and floor timbers on one side, leaving the rest of the bark on, so that they were just as straight and much stronger than

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sawed ones. Each stick was carefully mortised or tenoned by its stump, for I had borrowed other tools by this time. My days in the woods were not very long ones ; yet I usually carried my dinner of bread and butter, and read the newspaper in which it was wrapped, at noon, sitting amid the green pine boughs which I had cut off, and to my bread was imparted some of their fragrance, for my hands were covered with a thick coat of pitch. . . .

By the middle of April, for I made no haste in my work, but rather made the most of it, my house was framed and ready for the raising. . . . I began to occupy my house on the 4th of July, as soon as it was boarded and roofed, for the boards were carefully feather-edged and lapped, so that it was perfectly impervious to rain, but before boarding I laid the foundations of a chimney at one end, bringing two cart-loads of stones up the hill from the pond in my arms. . . .

My furniture, part of which I made myself, and the rest cost me nothing of which I have not rendered an account, consisted of a bed, a table, a desk, three chairs, a looking-glass three inches in diameter, a pair of tongs and andirons, a kettle, a skillet, and a frying-pan, a dipper, a wash-bowl, two knives and forks, three plates, one cup, one spoon, a jug for oil, a jug for molasses, and a japanned lamp.

Write of your education. Comment upon the result. Listen to Gibbon :—

To the University of Oxford I acknowledge no obligation ; and she will as cheerfully renounce me for a son as I am willing to disclaim her for a mother. I spent fourteen months at Magdalen College ; they proved the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life : the reader will pronounce between the school and the scholar, but I cannot affect to believe that nature has disqualified me for all literary pursuits. The specious and ready excuse of my tender age, imperfect preparation, and hasty departure, may doubt-

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less be alleged ; nor do I wish to defraud such excuses of their proper weight. Yet in my sixteenth year I was not devoid of capacity or application ; even my childish reading had displayed an early though blind propensity for books ; and the shallow flood might have been taught to flow in a deep channel and a clear stream. In the discipline of a well-constituted academy, under the guidance of skilful and vigilant professors, I should gradually have risen from translations to originals, from the Latin to the Greek classics, from dead languages to living science : my hours would have been occupied by useful and agreeable studies, the wanderings of fancy would have been restrained, and I should have escaped the temptation of idleness, which finally precipitated my departure from Oxford. . . . The schools of Oxford and Cambridge were founded in a dark age of false and barbarous science ; and they are still tainted with the vices of their origin. Their primitive discipline was adapted to the education of priests and monks ; and the government still remains in the hands of the clergy, an order of men whose manners are remote from the present world, and whose eyes are dazzled by the light of philosophy. . . . We may scarcely hope that any reformation will be a voluntary act ; and so deeply are they rooted in law and prejudice, that even the omnipotence of parliament would shrink from an inquiry into the state and abuses of the two universities.

The circle quickly widens. You go to fresh places. Describe those. You meet fresh people. Describe those. And without knowing it you will be gradually describing yourself. Don't try to make yourself out to be either better or worse than you are, or you'll make a false book. Your object is not to make people like or hate you, but to see you as you are.

Your object is not to invent a wildly exciting story, full of earthquakes and shipwrecks, but to prove that your actual life is interesting in spite of

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the fact that you may not be a buccaneer or a big-game hunter. You'll really be surprised to find, once you have made a start, if you have made a *proper* start, how easily your pen runs on, and how it all comes back to you. There's some magic about a pen that makes it act as a memory-reviver so long as you insist on it going on, not resting for an hour at every fullstop. By which I do not mean that you've got to get the story done at a sitting. I don't want you to hurry it. You can spend a whole day describing the clothes that your father or mother wear if you like. You haven't got to get it finished by any particular time.

Now that you are writing for all the world to read, you will have to be a good deal more careful of your style than you are in your letters. That only means that you have got to take a little more trouble over your writing, for you are not in undress any longer. You don't write your autobiography in bed. You have to sit up to do it. You are now in the workshop creating something of public importance. If you don't find it going as well as you expect, give it a rest and try writing the autobiographies of other people and other things.

In fact, that is a very good exercise, just as it was a good exercise to write letters from imaginary people or things to imaginary people or things. Here is the beginning of the autobiography of a newspaper, sent to me from a school in Cumberland :—

I began as last Thursday's issue of the *Daily Mirror*, the date being November 24, 1934. I was reclining idly on a book-stall in Newcastle Central station, when

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a dapper little business man dashed up. His face was red, and he was puffing and blowing like a wild March wind. He threw a penny down on the counter, and bolted to catch his train with me residing placidly under his arm. He wrenched open a carriage door, and dropped thankfully into a corner seat. He then proceeded to devour my contents as quickly as possible.

When we came to the next station a pompous old lady got in, with a huge market basket on her arm. The basket was full of golden-yellow butter, and fresh eggs. There was a fine drizzle coming down, and the paper on the basket was wet through. After looking at the paper closely I recognised it as one of my brothers. We exchanged compliments with each other.

The train was beginning to slacken down, although we were not in a station. My owner poked his head through the window, and asked what was the matter. I did not hear what the reply was, but it was evident the delay seemed to take some time. The little man fidgeted about, and kept looking at his watch. He was so restless and fidgety, and the other people were giving him such cross looks, the poor fellow did not know where he was.

At last we moved slowly away, and when we reached our destination, the little man made one bolt out of the door. I was left on the seat, forgotten. The market woman picked me up, and throwing her own paper out of the window, placed me on top of her basket.

At the next station the woman got out, and hurried out of the station.

There was a 'bus standing outside the station, and into this we went. The 'bus drove away, and the old lady uttered a sigh of relief. We very soon arrived outside the market, and here we got out.

Inside the market the place was in a turmoil. Men were shouting, women standing gossiping and the noise of feet was simply deafening. The old lady pushed here and there, and at last came to a stall. She began offering her wares to the man.

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"How much for your butter and eggs?"

"1/8 for the butter, and 1/10 for eggs, and not a penny less."

"Too much, lady; twopence less for each."

"No, not a penny less, my good fellow."

"All right, here you are, and good morning."

"Good morning."

She then marched away, her basket on her arm. The woman had left me on the stall, so the man picked me up, and seeing I was a new paper, stuffed me in his pocket. There I lay, listening to all that was going on around me, and what a noise. It grew worse as the day went on. . . .

Try and think yourself right inside the skins of animals and people, and then write their life-stories, and as they would write them. Write your cat's, your dog's, your rabbit's day-to-day life from its own point of view. We are always talking about walls having ears. Suppose them to have eyes too, and feelings. And write the autobiography of the desk you're sitting at, the bed you sleep in, the house you live in, and your church steeple.

But now let us return to your own autobiography. I have given you a few suggestions as to the general plan of the work, birth, childhood, schooldays and so on. Let us now see how William Cobbett looks back, towards the end of his life, to his boyhood. In age the tempo of life slows down, and this looking backward is not out of place as it might be with a young person who should be looking forward.

There is a little hop-garden in which I used to work when from eight to ten years old; from which I have scores of times run to follow the hounds, leaving the hoe to do the best that it could to destroy the weeds; but the most interesting thing was the sandhill which goes

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from a part of the heath down to the rivulet. As a due mixture of pleasure with toil, I, with two brothers, used occasionally to disport ourselves, as the lawyers call it, at this sandhill. Our diversion was this : we used to go to the top of the hill, which was steeper than the roof of a house ; one used to draw his arms out of the sleeves of his smock-frock, and lay himself down with his arms by his sides ; and the others, one at the head and the other at the feet, sent him rolling down the hill like a barrel or a log of wood. By the time he got to the bottom his hair, ears, eyes, nose and mouth were all full of this loose sand ; then the others took their turn, and at every roll there was a monstrous spell of laughter. I had often told my sons of this while they were very little, and I now took one of them to see the spot. But, that was not all. This was the spot where I was receiving my education ; and this was the sort of education ; and I am perfectly satisfied that if I had not received such an education, or something very much like it—that, if I had been brought up a milksop, with a nursery-maid everlastingly at my heels, I should have been at this day as great a fool, as inefficient a mortal, as any of those frivolous idiots that are turned out from Winchester and Westminster School, or from any of those dens of dunces called Colleges and Universities.

How is one to end one's autobiography ? There is no actual need to go out and shoot oneself after writing the last few lines. Benjamin Franklin breaks off abruptly : " We arrived in London the 27th July, 1757." You may wish to end yours at some particular mark or turning-point in your life, and I think that this is quite a good plan as it gives a kind of completeness to a necessarily incomplete work.

The following passage from Gibbon would have made such a conclusion. As it is, it is the prelude

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to the last few pages. For years "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" had occupied every minute of his time, and now the last sheets were ready for the printers. The consummation of his life-work was at hand. He wrote :—

It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that, whatsoever might be the future date of my *History*, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.

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- Testament of Youth. Vera Brittain.
- Lavengro. George Borrow.
- Adventures of a Younger Son. Edward John Trelawny.
- Wide Seas and Many Lands. Arthur Mason.

CHAPTER IV

BIOGRAPHY

Writing about Other People

You must often have felt impelled to quarrel with, or at any rate to be mystified by, the historian's or biographer's estimate of famous characters in history.

So much special pleading goes on that you find it difficult to trust any man's judgment.

Is Hilaire Belloc or is Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchan) right in his estimate of Cromwell?

Many biographers attempt to make their subjects fit a theory. Frank Harris's "Life of Shakespeare" is a good example of this.

It is tempting, as G. K. Chesterton pointed out, for one theorist to seize upon some trivial accident, like the dropping of a pipe, to prove characteristic carelessness, while another theorist seizes upon the picking up the pipe as a proof of characteristic carefulness. Again, no two biographers can be expected to see their subject from the same angle.

Mrs. Thrale brings out a childish peevishness and a love of nonsense in Dr. Johnson that Boswell misses altogether or purposely ignores. Compare the following pictures of Emily Brontë. The first is by Mrs. Gaskell.

But Emily—that free, wild, untamable spirit, never happy nor well but on the sweeping moors gathered

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round her home—that hater of strangers, doomed to live amongst them, and not merely to live but to slave in their service—what Charlotte could have borne patiently for herself, she could not bear for her sister. And yet what to do? She had once hoped that she herself might become an artist, and so earn her livelihood; but her eyes had failed her in the minute and useless labour which she had imposed upon herself with a view to this end.

It was the household custom among these girls to sew till nine o'clock at night. At that hour, Miss Branwell generally went to bed, and her nieces' duties for the day were accounted done. They put away their work, and began to pace the room backwards and forwards, up and down—as often with the candles extinguished, for economy's sake, as not—their figures glancing into the firelight, and out into the shadows, perpetually. At this time, they talked over past cares and troubles; they planned for the future, they consulted each other as to their plans. In after years this was the time for discussing together the plots of their novels. And again, still later, this was the time for the last surviving sister to walk alone, from old accustomed habit, round and round the desolate room, thinking sadly upon the “days that were no more.” But this Christmas of 1836 was not without its hopes and daring aspirations. They had tried their hands at story-writing, in their miniature magazine, long ago; they all of them “made out” perpetually. They had likewise attempted to write poetry; and had a modest confidence that they had achieved a tolerable success.

And this is by Romer Wilson :—

Whether literary effort, or learning, or carpet sweeping made the long winters in the Parsonage tolerable to Emily I do not know, nor whether she was bored, chained up indoors day after day with her three little companions: plain, peaked little Charlotte with her piercing eyes, and big-nosed freakish Branwell, and the

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doll Anne. When people came to the house, Branwell displayed himself cheerfully. He was never shy and stupid. How stupid were Charlotte and Emily? Very stupid, I believe, were these awkward and unprepossessing little objects in ugliest of clothes. Charlotte was extremely self-conscious to the point of physical pain in public—always. Emily, we are told, was uncouth. That she had her dreams of riches and achievements we know. When such as Emily fancy their ambitions are out of range of possibility, they turn resentful and express their resentment in silence and stiffness towards perfectly innocent contemporaries, begin to feel Cinderella and act Cinderella, and cultivate a presence and deportment rigid with wounded pride, a kind of “damn-you-behold-the-neglected-orphan” attitude. “I like it, thank you; I would not touch you happy people with a barge-pole.”

On the quiet, of course, these stiff-necked folk see no reason why they should not be Joan of Arc or *Caesar*, they win wars single-handed, and get given dukedoms whether they be girls or boys; save the King or Queen in their odd moments from Gunpowder plots; and in minor moods rescue the whole family from flaming houses, or make a million or two out of which they dispense enormous sums to their relations with good-for-evil generosity. The Cinderella business has its compensations.

The combination of slaving in the house and those Gondal legends which Emily began to indulge in later, full of persons of the highest rank on earth, make one suspect that Emily knew the sweets and bitternesses of self-imposed inferiority.

In the older biographies the biographers were frankly hero-worshippers, and in our grandfather's time it was considered unforgivable in Froude to reveal facts about Carlyle that we should certainly not worry about to-day.

Indeed, biographical writing has changed so

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much of recent years that one reviewer of a recent life of George the Fourth, begins his notice of the book thus : " I doubt whether any decade of our literature has been so fruitful in really detestable books of history and biography as the twenties of the twentieth century."

The fashion of belittling their subjects was begun by Lytton Strachey, whose scrupulous care for accuracy and detestation of the older method of adulation, led him into the opposite error.

He was the great debunker of established reputations.

" The art of biography," he says in *Eminent Victorians*, " seems to have fallen on evil times in England . . . we do not reflect that it is perhaps as difficult to write a good life as to live one."

He explains that his object is simply to expose, and with devilish ingenuity he reveals the oddities of Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, Cardinal Manning and General Gordon.

Florence Nightingale becomes under his incisive handling more interesting but certainly far less agreeable than we had thought her to be. Dr. Arnold turns out to be a reactionary, the founder of the worship of athletics and of good form.

But his method is seen at its most merciless in his picture of General Gordon of Khartoum :—

During the year 1883 a solitary English gentleman was to be seen wandering, with a thick book under his arm, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. His unassuming figure, short and slight, with its half-gliding, half-tripping motion, gave him a boyish aspect, which contrasted oddly, but not unpleasantly, with the touch

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of grey on his hair and whiskers. There was the same contrast—enigmatic and attractive—between the sun-burnt brick-red complexion—the hue of the seasoned traveller—and the large blue eyes, with their look of almost childish sincerity. To the friendly inquirer, he would explain, in a low, soft, and very distinct voice, that he was engaged in elucidating four questions—the site of the crucifixion, the line of division between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, the identification of Gibeon, and the position of the Garden of Eden. He was also, he would add, most anxious to discover the spot where the Ark first touched ground, after the subsidence of the Flood : he believed, indeed, that he had solved that problem, as a reference to some passages in the book which he was carrying would show.

This singular person was General Gordon, and his book was the Holy Bible.

In such complete retirement from the world and the ways of man, it might have seemed that a life of inordinate activity had found at last a longed-for, a final peacefulness. For month after month, for an entire year, the General lingered by the banks of the Jordan. But then the enchantment was suddenly broken. Once more adventure claimed him ; he plunged into the whirl of high affairs ; his fate was mingled with the frenzies of Empire and the doom of peoples. And it was not in peace and rest, but in ruin and horror, that he reached his end.

One result of this debunking habit has been to popularise biography.

It certainly was not easy to wade through the two fat volumes of ill-digested masses of material, padded out with indiscriminate praise, hiding everything in the least derogatory that used to pass for biography. How different and infinitely more readable are Daphne du Maurier's brilliant sketch of her father, Gerald, who never grew up ; Lord

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Birkenhead's portrait of his father; Winston Churchill's masterly lives of his father and his most famous ancestor, the Duke of Marlborough.

What skill André Maurois lavished on his reconstructed lives of Byron, Shelley and Dickens.

Robert Graves has even adapted the modern method to his presentation of the Emperor Claudius, perhaps the most completely successful of all modern biographies from the point of view of entertainment.

Certainly from the point of view of reading you will find modern biography at least as thrilling as the modern novel. And the best way of learning how to write is first to read the best examples in their kind and try to profit from the technique of the masters.

But do not allow yourself to be led into the error of thinking that to be good a biography has to be malicious.

Mr. Arthur Bryant is one of the ablest of modern biographers, and he is certainly not malicious towards either Charles II. or Pepys.

Mr. Roger Fulford has found a better side to George the Fourth than any previous biographer, and Professor Neale has been kinder to Queen Elizabeth than most of his contemporaries.

There has been of late a rare run of biographies on the stage and cinema. There have been three or four plays about the Brontës, one on Richard II., one on Clive of India, two or three on Mary Queen of Scotland, who lends herself most readily to passionate romantic drama, Mr. and Mrs. Browning, and Joan of Arc.

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On the film we have had Disraeli, the Duke of Wellington, Nell Gwyn, Queen Christina, Catherine the Great, and Henry VIII. There is certainly no lack of opportunity of seeing how biography is being treated to-day.

But in order to be able to see how it has grown into its present place in the category of writing, it is useful to see how it was done earlier.

In its early stages biography was just a character sketch, perhaps a composite portrait to make a type. You might with advantage imitate Sir Thomas Overbury's attempts in this kind by writing the biography or character of a village cricketer or a country parson.

Here is Overbury's "Fair and Happy Milk-maid" :—

Is a Country Wench, that is so far from making herself beautiful by art that one look of hers is able to put all face-physick out of countenance. She knows a fair look is but a dumb orator to commend virtue, therefore minds it not. All her excellencies stand in her so silently, as if they had stolen upon her without her knowledge. The lining of her apparel (which is herself) is far better than outsides of tissue : for though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silk-worm, she is decked in innocence, a far better wearing. She doth not, with lying long abed, spoil both her complexion and conditions ; nature hath taught her too immoderate sleep is rust to the soul : she rises therefore with Chanticleer, her dame's cock, and at night makes the lamb her curfew. In milking a cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk-press makes the milk the whiter or sweeter ; for never came almond glove or aromatic ointment on her palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet when she reaps them, as if they

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wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them. Her breath is her own, which scents all the year long of June, like a new-made haycock. She makes her hand hard with labour, and her ear soft with pity ; and when winter evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheel) she sings a defiance to the giddy wheel of Fortune. She doth all things with so sweet a grace, it seems ignorance will not suffer her to do ill, being her mind is to do well. She bestows her year's wages at next fair ; and in chusing her garments counts no bravery i' th' world like decency. The garden and beehive are all her physick and chirurgery and she lives the longer for it. She dares go alone, and unfold sheep in the night, and fears no manner of ill, because she means none : yet to say truth, she is never alone, for she is still accompanied with old songs, honest thoughts, and prayers, but short ones ; yet they have their efficacy in that they are not palled with ensuing idle cogitations. Lastly, her dreams are so chaste that she dare tell them ; only a Friday's dream is all her superstition : that she conceals for fear of anger. Thus lives she, and all her care is she may die in the spring-time, to have store of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet.

Almost equally happy is Overbury's sketch of a Franklin :—

His outside is an ancient Yeoman of England, though his inside may give arms (with the best gentlemen) and ne'er see the herald. There is no truer servant in the house than himself. Though he be master, he says not to his servants " Go to field," but " Let us go " ; and with his own eye doth both fatten his flock and set forward all manner of husbandry. He is taught by nature to be contented with a little ; his own fold yields him both food and raiment : he is pleased with any nourishment God sends, whilst curious gluttony ransacks, as it were, Noah's Ark for food, only to feed the riot of one meal. He is ne'er known to go to law ;

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understanding to be law-bound among men is like to be hide-bound among his beasts ; they thrive not under it : and that such men sleep as unquietly as if their pillows were stuffed with Lawyer's penknives. When he builds, no poor tenant's cottage hinders his prospect : they are indeed his Almshouses, though there be painted on them no such superscription : he never sits up late, but when he hunts the badger, the vowed foe of his lambs : nor uses he any cruelty, but when he hunts the hare, nor subtilty, but when he setteth snares for the Snite or pitfalls for the Blackbird ; nor oppression, but when in the mouth of July he goes to the next river and shears his sheep. He allows of honest pastime, and thinks not the bones of the dead anything bruised, or the worse for it, though the country lasses dance in the churchyard after evensong. Rock Monday, and the Wake in summer, Shrotings, the wakeful catches on Christmas Eve, the Hoky, or Seed cake, these he yearly keeps, yet holds them no relics of Popery. He is not so inquisitive after news derived from the privy closet, when the finding an ærie of Hawks in his own ground, or the foaling of a colt comes of a good strain, are tidings more pleasant, more profitable. He is lord paramount within himself, though he hold by never so mean a tenure ; and dies the more contentedly (though he leave his heir young), in regard he leaves him not liable to a covetous Guardian. Lastly, to end him : he cares not when his end comes, he needs not fear his Audit for his *quietus* is in heaven.

And in the same category a century or more later comes Joseph Addison with his half-fanciful character sketches of Will Wimble and Sir Roger de Coverley.

You can see at once how one type of biography has sprung out of the other.

Will Wimble is younger brother to a baronet, and descended of the ancient family of Wimbles. He is now

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between forty and fifty ; but being bred to no business and born to no estate, he generally lives with his elder brother as superintendent of his game. He hunts a pack of dogs better than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare. He is extremely well versed in all the little handicrafts of an idle man : He makes a may-fly to a miracle ; and furnishes the whole country with angle-rods. As he is a good-natured officious fellow, and very much esteemed upon account of his family, he is a welcome guest at every house, and keeps up a good correspondence among all the gentlemen about him. He carries a tulip root in his pocket from one to another, or exchanges a puppy between a couple of friends that live perhaps in the opposite sides of the county. Will is a particular favourite of all the young heirs, whom he frequently obliges with a net that he has weaved, or a setting-dog that he has made himself : He now and then presents a pair of garters of his own knitting to their mothers or sisters ; and raises a great deal of mirth among them, by enquiring as often as he meets them how they wear ? These gentlemen-like manufacture and obliging little humours, make Will the darling of the country.

And here is one aspect of Sir Roger de Coverley :—

My friend, Sir Roger, being a good churchman, has beautified the inside of his church with several texts of his own choosing : He has likewise given a handsome pulpit-cloth, and railed in the communion-table at his own expense. He has often told me, that at his coming to his estate he found his parishoners very irregular ; and that in order to make them kneel and join in their responses, he gave every one of them a hassock and a common prayer-book : and at the same time employed an itinerant singing-master, who goes about the country for that purpose, to instruct them rightly in the tunes of the psalms ; upon which they now very much value themselves, and indeed outdo most of the country churches that I have ever heard.

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As Sir Roger is landlord to the whole congregation, he keeps them in very good order, and will suffer nobody to sleep in it besides himself ; for if by chance he has been surprised into a short nap at sermon, upon recovering out of it he stands up and looks about him, and if he sees any body else nodding, either wakes them himself, or sends his servant to them. Several other of the old Knight's particularities break out upon these occasions : Sometimes he will be lengthening out a verse in the singing-psalms, half a minute after the rest of the congregation have done with it ; sometimes, when he is pleased with the matter of his devotion, he pronounces *Amen* three or four times to the same prayer ; and sometimes stands up when every body else is upon their knees, to count the congregation, or see if any of his tenants are missing.

By far the best biography ever written was that of Dr. Johnson, and one of the reasons that it is the best is that Boswell never stopped taking notes. Nothing was too trivial for him to record. He shadowed Johnson wherever he went, watching him like a sleuth hound, taking down pretty well everything that he said, and noting everything that he did, and the result is that he was able to build up a more complete picture of a man than any other biographer has ever done before or since.

Perhaps you'd like to know what were the things about Dr. Johnson that Boswell tells us, so that you may know what makes the best material for a good biography.

Well, here is Dr. Johnson as Boswell saw him :—

He was almost blind in one eye, and as he didn't like this to be noticed in church he used to go into the fields and read there. Even worse than this were

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frequent black moods of dejection which made him surly, irritable and languid. There were times when he could not even tell the time by the town-clock. To try to cure himself he would walk from his home in Lichfield to Birmingham and back again, but it didn't make him any better. Somebody paid for him to go to Oxford, but there wasn't enough money for him to stay there the full time. Some friendly undergraduates, seeing that his toes were peeping out through his worn-out shoes, put a new pair outside his door, but he was too proud to accept them and threw them away. His father, who was a bookseller, was a failure, and left the boy penniless. So he became a schoolmaster, but hated teaching so much that he had to give it up after a few months. At the age of twenty-six he fell in love with a widow nearly twice his age who had enough money to enable him to start a school of his own, but that was a failure because he only got three pupils. But one of them, David Garrick, became the most famous actor of his time.

His pupils used to peep through the keyhole to make fun of the love-making of the fat, almost blind, ungainly schoolmaster and his equally fat, affected, painted wife.

After the failure of his school, Johnson went to try his fortune in London by writing, armed with a play that he had written, but no money. He was paid ten guineas for a poem, and wrote for magazines, but the book that brought him fame was a biography, the life-story of a friend called Richard Savage, with whom he had spent nights wandering through the streets because they had no money for

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a lodging. The book that most people probably know him by, if they know anything about him at all, is his "Dictionary," which took him eight years to complete. He had six men to help him. When his wife died he took into his house a negro, a blind woman and several other people who couldn't look after themselves. He would slip pennies into the hands of children lying asleep on the doorsteps, and once when he was asked why he always gave money to beggars, replied : "Why, Madam, to enable them to beg on." He was generous even to the extent of buying oysters for his cat, but he was gruff and violent-tempered. On one occasion in a theatre a man took Johnson's seat when he left it for a minute and refused to give it up on his return, so Johnson picked up the man and the chair, and threw them both into the pit. He had an amazing energy. He rode fifty miles in a single day on horseback after hounds, bathed in the sea at Brighton in October when he was sixty, ran a race in the rain in Paris when he was sixty-six, jumped a railing twice at seventy, and actually took the knife out of the doctor's hands when he was being operated on before his death, and helped to cut himself open.

In his dress Johnson was very slovenly ; he wore a rusty-brown morning suit, old unbuckled shoes, and a little shrivelled-up, unpowdered wig, perched right on top of his head, with the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches and his black worsted stockings all hanging loose. His waistcoats were always spotted with grease and stains of tea and food.

He talked a broad Staffordshire dialect. He used

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to say "thear" for there, "woonse" for once, and "poonsh" for punch.

As he walked he rolled his head and body, and to calm himself after being annoyed he used to waggle his feet up and down like a small boy.

He ate with such savage haste that the veins used to stand out and beads of sweat to pour down his face. He was for ever drinking tea, and repeating bits of the Lord's Prayer aloud to himself. Whenever he went in or out of a door or passage he was always careful that either his left or right foot (Boswell forgot which) should make the first actual movement when he came to it. If he did not get it right he would go back and do it again. He touched every lamp-post that he passed. He made all sorts of queer noises with his mouth, sometimes half whistling, sometimes clucking like a hen, and sometimes repeating "too-too-too-too," like a crooner on the radio. Then he would blow out his breath like a whale.

You can understand how exciting it must have been to write the biography of so eccentrically behaved a man as this, but his odd behaviour was only one side of him. His wife said, after first hearing him talk, "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life," and it is the common sense of Dr. Johnson's talk that makes him so great a character. Here is a specimen of his conversation :—

My dear friend, clear your mind of cant. You may *talk* as other people do : you may say to a man, "Sir, I am your humble servant !" You are *not* his most humble servant. You may say, "These are bad times : it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times !"

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You don't mind the times. You tell a man, "I am *sorry* you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet!" You don't care *sixpence* whether he's wet or dry. You may *talk* in this manner; it is a mode of talking in society; but don't *think* foolishly.

Here is Boswell's first meeting with Johnson :—

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr. Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us—he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, "Look, my Lord, it comes." I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his Dictionary, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation, which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua has very kindly presented to me, and from which an engraving has been made for this work. Mr. Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, "Don't tell where I come from." "From Scotland," cried Davies roguishly.

"Mr. Johnson," said I, "I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it." I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as a light pleasantry to soothe and conciliate him, and not as an humiliating abasement at the expense of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression "come from Scotland," which I used in the sense of being of that country; and, as if I

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had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, "That, Sir, I find, is what a very great number of your contrymen cannot help."

Well, doesn't that make you feel as if you really have known Dr. Johnson, and doesn't it make you feel that he was really worth knowing? So take Boswell for your model for biography, and imitate his method, but as well as having his patience you must search for someone worth exercising your patience on.

People seem to be interesting in proportion as they are a little eccentric, so you don't want to write about someone who behaves as everybody else behaves—dull people make dull biographies—but someone who thinks for himself, acts for himself, and isn't afraid of being unusual. You've got to think of your biography as if it were a play or film (Dr. Johnson's life would make a grand film), and make it dramatic and funny and humorous. You know how dull the lists of kings are, just a string of dates. Well, don't let your biography be like that. What we remember about Hooker is not his preaching, but the fact that he was henpecked, and that is what makes Walton's life of him so interesting.

His two pupils, Edwin Sandys and George Cranmer, took a journey to see their tutor ; where they found him with a book in his hand (it was the "Odes of Horace") he being then like humble and innocent Abel, tending his small allotment of sheep in a common field ; which he told his pupils he was forced to do then, for that his servant had gone home to dine, and assist his wife to do some necessary household business. But when his servant returned and released him, then his two pupils attended him unto his house, where their best entertain-

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ment was his quiet company which was presently denied them ; for Richard was called to rock the cradle ; and the rest of their welcome was so like this, that they stayed but till next morning, which was time enough to discover and pity their tutor's condition ; and having in that time rejoiced in the remembrance, and then paraphrased on many of the innocent recreations of their younger days, and other like diversions, and thereby given him as much present comfort as they were able, they were forced to leave him to the company of his wife Joan, and seek themselves a quieter lodging for next night. But at their parting from him, Mr. Cranmer said, " Good tutor, I am sorry your lot is fallen on no better ground, as to your parsonage ; and more sorry that your wife proves not a more comfortable companion, after you have wearied yourself in your restless studies." To whom the good man replied, " My dear George, if saints have usually a double share in the miseries of this life, I, that am none, ought not to repine at what my wise Creator hath appointed to me : but labour, as indeed I do daily, to submit mine to his will, and possess my soul in patience and peace."

Remember that men live in deeds, not years, and search until you find the right sort of stories to illustrate their characters. By the right sort of story I mean that of the dying Sir Philip Sidney handing his water-bottle to the wounded soldier with the words : " Thy need is greater than mine."

By the right kind of story I mean that of Sir Walter Raleigh throwing his silken cloak down in the mud so that Queen Elizabeth should not get her shoes muddy.

Stories like that of George Washington never telling a lie, and Nelson as a child not knowing the meaning of the word fear, are I think quite stupid.

To be a great man you don't need to be perfect

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or a prig. Dr. Johnson was a very great man, and he was neither.

I feel much more at home with the sort of potted biography that is light-hearted. This sort of thing :

Sir Christopher Wren
Said " I am going to dine with some men,
If anybody calls,
Say I'm designing Saint Paul's."

or this :—

What I like about Clive
Is that he is no longer alive.
There is a great deal to be said
For being dead.

Try and compress some of your biographies into four lines of verse like this.

You must at all costs avoid being pompous or heavy.

Your selection of letters, like your selection of incidents, should be sparing and directly illuminating.

The two most satisfying biographies in the language after Boswell, are Southey's " Life of Nelson," which is very short, and Lockhart's " Life of Scott," which is very long.

Southey's Preface is a model of brevity. Here it is :—

Many lives of Nelson have been written : one is yet wanting, clear and concise enough to become a manual for the young sailor, which he may carry about with him till he has treasured up the example in his memory and in his heart. In attempting such a work, I shall write the eulogy of our great naval hero ; for the best eulogy of Nelson is the faithful history of his actions ;

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the best history, that which shall relate them most perspicuously.

This small and vivid biography appeared in two slim volumes in 1813.

It is admirable writing of the martial sort, as this extract from the description of the Battle of Trafalgar will show :—

The enemy continued to fire a gun at a time at the *Victory*, till they saw that a shot had passed through her main-top-gallant-sail ; then they opened their broadsides, aiming chiefly at her rigging, in the hope of disabling her before she could close with them. Nelson, as usual, had hoisted several flags, lest one should be shot away. The enemy showed no colours till late in the action, when they began to feel the necessity of having them to strike. For this reason, the *Santissima Trinidad*, Nelson's old acquaintance, as he used to call her, was distinguishable only by her four decks ; and to the bow of this opponent he ordered the *Victory* to be steered. Meantime an incessant raking fire was kept up upon the *Victory*. The admiral's secretary was one of the first who fell ; he was killed by a cannon shot, while conversing with Hardy. Captain Adair, of the marines, with the help of a sailor, endeavoured to remove the body from Nelson's sight, who had a great regard for Mr. Scott ; but he anxiously asked : " Is that poor Scott that's gone ? " and being informed that it was indeed so, exclaimed : " Poor fellow ! " Presently a double-headed shot struck a party of marines, who were drawn up on the poop, and killed eight of them ; upon which Nelson immediately desired Captain Adair to disperse his men round the ship, that they might not suffer so much from being together. A few minutes afterwards a shot struck the fore brace bits on the quarterdeck, and passed between Nelson and Hardy, a splinter from the bit tearing off Hardy's buckle and bruising his foot. Both stopped, and looked anxiously at each other, each

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supposing the other to be wounded. Nelson then smiled, and said : " This is too warm work, Hardy, to last long . . . "

Nelson declared that, in all his battles, he had seen nothing which surpassed the cool courage of his crew on this occasion. At four minutes after twelve she (the *Victory*) opened her fire from both sides of her deck. It was not possible to break the enemy's line without running on board one of their ships ; Hardy informed him of this, and asked which he would prefer. Nelson replied : " Take your choice, Hardy, it does not signify much." The master was then ordered to put the helm to port, and the *Victory* ran on board the *Redoubtable*, just as her tiller ropes were shot away.

Lockhart's biography of Scott, as befits a more leisurely subject, moves more slowly, but if you want to know how to write a man's life, Lockhart is your better model :—

" I have endeavoured," he says, " to lay before the reader those parts of Sir Walter's character to which we have access, as they were indicated in his sayings and doings through the long series of his years—making use, whenever it was possible, of his own letters and diaries other than of any other materials—but refrained from obtruding almost anything of comment. It was my wish to let the character develop itself."

And for seven volumes he follows with admirable effect his clever way of letting Sir Walter Scott build up his own character.

We see to what a tremendous extent letters betray the characters of their writers.

These letters give a sense of Scott's charm that no amount of description could give, and Lockhart has a nice sense of the value of anecdote.

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Here is an unforgettable picture of the visit of the poet Crabbe to Edinburgh in 1822 :—

The poet Crabbe, to whom he had been introduced when last in London by Mr. Murray of Albemarle Street, after repeatedly promising to follow up the acquaintance by an excursion to the north, had at last arrived in the midst of these tumultuous preparations for the royal advent. Notwithstanding all such impediments, he found his quarters ready for him, and Scott entering, wet and hurried, embraced the venerable man with brotherly affection. The royal gift was forgotten—the ample skirt of the coat within which it had been packed, and which he had hitherto held cautiously in front of his person, slipped back to its more usual position—he sat down beside Crabbe, and the glass was crushed to atoms. His scream and gesture made his wife conclude that he had sat down on a pair of scissors, or the like ; but very little harm had been done except the breaking of the glass, of which alone he had been thinking. This was a damage not to be repaired : as for the scratch that accompanied it, its scar was of no great consequence, as even when mounting the “*cat-dath*, or battle garment ” of the Celtic Club, he adhered, like his hero Waverley, to *the trews*.

By six o'clock next morning, Sir Walter, arrayed in the “*Garb of old Gaul* ” (which he had of the Campbell tartan, in memory of one of his great grandmothers), was attending a muster of these gallant Celts in the Queen Street Gardens, where he had the honour of presenting them with a set of colours, and delivered a suitable exhortation, crowned with their rapturous applause. Some members of the Club, all of course in their full costume, were invited to breakfast with him. He had previously retired for a little to his library, and when he entered the parlour, Mr. Crabbe, dressed in the highest style of professional neatness and decorum, with buckles in his shoes, and whatever was then considered as befitting an English clergyman of his years and station,

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was standing in the midst of half a dozen stalwart Highlanders, exchanging elaborate civilities with them, in what was at least meant to be French. He had come into the room shortly before, without having been warned about such company, and hearing the party conversing in an unknown tongue, the polite old man had adopted, in his first salutation, what he considered as the universal language. Some of the Celts, on their part, took him for some foreign abbé or bishop, and were doing their best to explain to him that they were not the wild savages for which, from the startled glance he had thrown on their hirsute proportions, there seemed but too much reason to suspect he had taken them ; others, more perspicacious, gave into the thing for the joke's sake ; and there was high fun when Scott dissolved the charm of their stammering, by grasping Crabbe with one hand, and the nearest of these figures with the other, and greeted the whole group with the same hearty *good-morning*.

Sir Walter's unremitting energy could not have been more effectively brought out than it is in the account of William Menzies' dinner-party in June 1814 :—

It was a party of very young persons, most of them, like Menzies and myself, destined for the bar of Scotland, all gay and thoughtless, enjoying the first flush of manhood, with little remembrance of the yesterday or care of the morrow. When my companion's worthy father and uncle, after seeing two or three bottles go round, left the juveniles to themselves, the weather being hot, we adjourned to a library which had one large window looking northwards. After carousing here for an hour or more, I observed that a shade had come over the aspect of my friend, who happened to be placed immediately opposite to myself, and said something that intimated a fear of his being unwell. "No," said he, "I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me

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sit where you are, and take my chair ; for there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won't let me fill my glass with a good will." I rose to change places with him accordingly, and he pointed out to me this hand, which, like the writing on Belshazzar's wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. "Since we sat down," he said, "I have been watching it—it fascinates my eye—it never stops—page after page is finished and thrown on that heap of MS., and still it goes on unwearied—and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night—I can't stand the sight of it when I am not at my books." "Some stupid, dogged, engrossing clerk, probably," exclaimed myself, or some other giddy youth in our society. "No, boys," said our host, "I well know what hand it is—'tis Walter Scott's." This was the hand that, in the evenings of three summer weeks, wrote the two last volumes of "Waverley."

Lockhart does not rely as Boswell does on giving us his portrait through conversation, for the simple reason that Johnson was a great conversationalist and Sir Walter Scott was no conversationalist at all.

You must use your discretion.

In any life of Keats, letters would play a large part, because Keats was a superb letter-writer, but in the biography of a contemporary you would find letters of much less value. Letter-writing as a habit and an art has undergone a severe change for the worse in the last hundred years.

You will find the sketch of George IV., at the end of this chapter, done by a girl of thirteen, helpful in its freshness and general attitude to the subject.

The best help I can give you is to read as many biographies as you can lay your hands on, and think

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a long time before you decide whose life you are going to write. And it will help you if you have shared the same likes and dislikes as your subject.

It is very little use a non-sportsman trying to write the life of a master of foxhounds or a bishop writing the biography of a convict.

If you hate the sea, don't write the life of a sailor. John Masefield's "Dauber" is successful, because he knew so well what it feels like to sail round the Horn. He has done it.

Here is "GEORGE IV"

by Rosemary Sanders

A brief biography of George IV., of his naughty intrigues, his loathing for his wife, his marriage—showing him to be monstrous, of his father's madness and death, and of how his wife died broken and defeated, and he gleaned a little pitied happiness.

Chosen because he was an interesting character, with a fine beginning ; which ended in a pathetic death, alone and unfriended.

Even in the fact of his noticeable callousness, one is inclined to like him. Criminals are supposed to have charm, this un-arrested man certainly had—at times.

" Yet I have seen him live,
And owned my friend, a king :
All that he came to give
He gave : and I, who sing
His ' praise,' bring all I have to bring."

LIONEL JOHNSON.

GEORGE IV. 1762-1830

George IV. lived in an atmosphere of hate throughout his life. Even in his childhood, when the king's mother, hated by all the nation, died, he made the wise philosophical statement : " Hatred seems the keynote of this family."

The ministers who had been discussing the dead queen, did not realise that a naughty little truant was hiding

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in an old high-backed chair. Startled by his remark, they dispersed, the little prince running back to his quarters.

George was only ten, and hated his grandmother ; so he listened gladly, happy that others hated her too.

Life for him in his childhood was terribly unexciting ; very dull at his mother's house, even more so at Kew. He hated his father, and took the reverse views in anything his father thought, did or said.

When he was at Kew he and his brother were given garden plots to tend. He hated it. George III. was known as " Farmer George," living during the Agrarian Revolution.

Bishop Hurd frequently flogged the poor prince, until one day, in a temper, the prince flogged him instead.

No interest in the outside world was really allowed them, spies were always watching. The king was very reluctant to give George a certain amount of independence at eighteen.

The young prince was accepted in town as a dandy. The latest mode was worn by him, with a newly devised shoe-buckle—it was an instantaneous success.

He was living with his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who was not received at court. This had taken a long time and much persuasion before it was permitted.

Naturally, as a young man of leisure, he fell in love. It was with Mrs. Robinson, the Perdita of a " Winter's Tale." The whole house was aware of his reaction to her acting, as was she !

Little letters and charmingly arranged episodes became part of his evening's occupations. In two years' time she had been set up in a house in Cork Street. Mrs. Robinson was his " queen." His " court " received such notable personages as Charles Fox, Sheridan, or Richard Brinsley. His " court " was held at Duchess of Devonshire's Carlton House. Gradually his enthusiasm waned ; he " swapped " his queen for Charles Fox's mistress, Mrs. Armistead.

When George reached the age of twenty his whole

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ambition was popularity. By now his manners were charming, he could make his conversation brilliant and witty, had a remarkable ear for music, and also a talent for mimicry.

He took to politics at once, taking the Whigs' ideas ; at the next election he and his friends canvassed, bribed, and by so doing the Whigs obtained a majority.

Delighted, George held a *fête* at Carlton House, receiving Fox as guest of honour. His poor father was compelled to pass on his way to open Parliament.

When the Prince of Wales was twenty-two his emotions went deeper than he had ever experienced ; he fell in love with Mrs. Fitzherbert. She was delicately beautiful and looked younger than she was really, twenty-eight.

He proposed continually, wept, stormed, tried to coerce her into marriage. He won his battle, after a long struggle Mrs. Fitzherbert gave way.

It was, of course, a *sub rosa* marriage. Rumours spread, and were denied. London did not know how to receive this incredible news. It was ignored. His wife's discretion was admirable. The secret marriage quietened George, he abandoned Carlton House, and went to live in Brighton.

Parliament took up this matter. A secret marriage with a commoner was a preposterous idea. Fox made an eloquent speech and the matter subsided.

By now, 1788, George III.'s behaviour was becoming eccentric. Rumours drifted to Brighton, then particulars. Prince George was delighted ; he ordered his father to go to his hated Kew, where he was treated abominably according to the Prince's instructions. There was even a question of regency. George, heartless man, was glad. Unfortunately the king recovered.

During this period the French Revolution was occurring in France. Refugees fled to Brighton, which was compelled to grow.

Suddenly Mrs. Fitzherbert received a callous note informing her the Prince would no longer see her. She

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knew they were drifting apart, but it was sudden. Lady Jersey was the trouble, she was taking her place.

Parliament, astounded at George's debts, stated that marrying would be the only means of paying for them.

The Prince considered it, deciding it could not be. He heard Caroline of Brunswick was beautiful, debts piled up; he quelled his conscience, and gave way. What a heartless, callous man he was at thirty-two.

Poor Caroline was really a princess, with the gaiety, love and impulsiveness that we have. She was advised by Lord Malmesbury, who had many doubts as to her reception.

George, a beautiful rotter, turned up for the wedding drunk!! Imagine the consternation, but Caroline carried it off charmingly. George loathed his wife.

Soon Lady Jersey fell from favour; he reconciled Mrs. Fitzherbert. How queer women are, Caroline and Mrs. Fitzherbert admired each other.

In 1796, Princess Charlotte was born. So malicious was the Prince that he forbade his wife to visit his child more than twice a week. He had a knowledge of his wife's adoration for children.

Beau Brummell had a royal pupil. George, wishing to be a leader of fashion, naturally made friends with him. He never outwitted Beau Brummell, although he quarrelled with him. When they next met in a public place he cut Brummell, who murmured audibly to his friend, "Who is that fat man?"

* George's life was overshadowed by two events, the Napoleonic Wars and the life of the younger Pitt.

All the remainder of his life, George maintained one passion—his glorious hate for his wife. She stood always in his path; he was completely lacking in mercy and the decency of a gentleman. I suppose princes are gentlemen. It was said of him:

"A noble hasty course he ran

Superbly filthy and fastidious.

He was the world's first gentleman

And made the appellation hideous."

PRAED.

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Princess Charlotte at eighteen was a woman with her own determination. She had many verbal fights with her father, marrying, after many scenes—the man of own wish, Leopold of Coburg.

[Before she married her grandfather died, naturally George succeeded.]

Before she married her grandfather became mentally ill ; George became Prince-Regent. Knowing that his wife was deprived of a sincere friend, he made life as intolerable as he was able for Caroline. The nation was against him, adoring his daughter and sympathising with his wife.

Charlotte died in 1817, because of her child, who was still-born. The nation's hopes were shattered, its grief was tremendous. The mob, frantic with rage, decided that the queen (her grandmother) was responsible. The Prince-Regent bled himself, and recovered. He was angry ; his line should continue, his determination became more acute to rid himself of his wife.

Caroline was abroad. After the reports of peace reached England (Napoleonic Wars) she fled gratefully to Brunswick. Having exhausted its pleasure, she journeyed elsewhere. At Leghorn she heard that George III. was dead.

Caroline, throughout her travels had done her uttermost—even at her own expense—to make George look ridiculous, now she succeeded ! George realised it, and was furious. He was never going to let her be crowned.

It was a ludicrous situation, he would not be crowned because of his malicious feelings for his wife ; he was determined to find or produce enough evidence for a divorce. He did produce it, very little truth was stated in that court, most of it was “payed evidence.” Lord Brougham triumphantly sorted out truth from perjury. George lost his case. If he had not, Brougham would probably have exposed his knowledge of George's first marriage.

The queen in vain essayed to attend the coronation. She was too weary to fight, her life had been one

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disillusion after another. After a long, painful illness, Caroline died on August the seventh, 1821, at twenty-five minutes past ten (p.m.). The cruel king, glad, tried to prohibit her death procession from going through the main streets ; he ordered it to go by back streets to Westminster. The furious mob stopped with barriers the entrances, so the procession made its way gallantly through the Strand.

George was in Ireland, he did not attempt to hide his joy or show any signs of remorse. He merely postponed his entry into Dublin for decency's sake.

* * * * *

His everlasting (seemingly) struggle against his wife caused his cruel nature to overcome his signs of a brilliant, charming young man.

He was old in 1830, and ill. George refused to believe he was dying, but continued to dream pleasantly of happy—he was happy occasionally—of past moments. His mind wandered over his many infatuations, delightful “Perdita,” Maria Fitzherbert, the only woman that he loved—he did in his own brutal way—Lady Jersey, then—that continual black cloud, Caroline. He had rid himself of her, she spoiled his life. He was glad he’d “won.”

He died in June.

Poor man, his tragedy was played. It was tragedy, a brilliant, witty, delightfully-mannered youth turned into a sour, tremendously fat, one might say fool ; but he is almost pathetic.

The people considered his funeral as a public festival. The only honour paid was the firing of heavy guns. This should be done for every king, good or bad ; all men have their moments before they degenerate.

“ Good-bye ; no tears nor cries
Are fitting here, and long lament is vain.”

W. J. MACKAIL.

So ends the biography of another George Rex.

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CHAPTER V

TRAVEL

Writing about Places

TRAVEL is really an extended form of the diary, letter and autobiography, for you now set out to describe the adventures you meet with and the impressions made upon by you by strange places.

It is the commonest form of writing, and one of the most difficult to do well.

Almost everybody travels, in youth to gain experience, to become less self-centred, to acquire languages, and to meet fresh people ; in mature life as a reaction from hard work, to regain health, to amuse oneself, and once more to meet fresh people.

This meeting of fresh people is one of the most important reasons for travel, and you will find that the entertainment value of what you write depends far more on your description of the people you meet than of the places you visit.

Bare descriptions of places, as you find in reading Scott's novels, can quickly become wearisome.

It is also worth remembering that travel by itself does not necessarily provide good reading.

You have to bring to it an alert mind, a real zest for ferreting out what lies below the surface, and almost a genius for selection, for there is so much to see that you will only confuse the reader if you tell him everything.

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What your reader mainly wants to hear is in what way the people you are describing are different from himself. It doesn't matter very much whether you are writing of your own particular town or village, or of the South Sea Islands, your method of attack should be the same.

Before starting travel-writing on a large scale, it is invaluable training to have a shot at something in miniature first. It will give you a chance to find your feet.

What shall it be? There is a vast field of suitable subjects. A week-end away from home, a day in London, or an excursion of five minutes or five hours off your normal beat, any of these can provide enough material for a volume.

Supposing that you are going for a week-end in the country, the first thing to do is to buy a notebook that will go easily into a pocket. This notebook is going to be a sort of diary from which you will subsequently select the most promising happenings and impressions to weave into your narrative.

Note everything down. Not at length, but just a few words that will re-create in your mind the outlines of the scenes you encounter. If you try and make long entries every few minutes you will soon come to the conclusion that travel writing is the dulllest possible way of wasting time.

Here is a page from one of my own notebooks, giving a few impressions of Haworth :—

Steep streets.

Dark church on top of hill.

Friendly people.

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Three tiny mummers.
Snowdrifts by slagheaps of stones.
Ling, heather.
Woodcuts of churchyard trees.
A lamp-lighter.
The mummers in tap room.
The wireless retrospect.
Branwell's chair.
Wonderful dinner.
Hot fires.

Those few hastily-jotted words are enough to bring back to my mind, even now, several years afterwards, all the details of my first few hours in that sombre Yorkshire moorland village. Naturally, these notes will mean nothing very much to you, just as your notes would convey little to me, but it will give you some idea of an excellent method of getting a good stock of really useful material together.

When you get home you will have in your notebook a shadowy outline of your whole trip from start to finish. You will also probably have a number of photographs you have taken, or picture postcards you have bought. If you lack historical details of any castles or other ancient buildings you may have encountered, your nearest public library will probably help you to fill in the blanks.

With all this in front of you, half the difficulties of travel-writing will have been swept away, and it will not be a case of padding out half-remembered incidents, but of selecting the "high spots" and deciding what you will have to leave out.

Keep one thing before you the whole time—the

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fact that you are not writing a guide-book. A guide-book has no room to include scraps of conversation heard in the lamp-lit peace of the village inn at evening, nor how the author may have spent two hours with his nose buried in the wild thyme on the downs, but you have.

The food you will have on your trip is bound to be different from that at home. Say so. Some of the best travel-writing has been on the subject of food. Aim to make the mouths of your readers water. Achieve that and you will hold their attention indefinitely.

Cobbett's description of his first breakfast in America is a model of that sort of thing. Here is a fragment from Hazlitt on the same theme :—

It was on the tenth of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise*, at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. . . . It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot.

Here is an ideal descriptive passage by Mr. William Bliss from "The Heart of England by Waterway" :—

It was—for I can, like Hazlitt, fix it with the precision of a lover—on the 6th September in the year 1894, at about 12.30 in the afternoon that I came into the White Hart Inn at Cricklade and asked what I could have to eat. I had camped alone the night before just below the Sapperton Tunnel and had come through it in the early dawn and all along the Thames and Severn Canal by Kemble and Siddington and South Cerney, some seventeen or eighteen miles, and so had dropped into the Thames out of the North Wilts Canal just above

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Cricklade. I have seldom been hungrier, or as thirsty, in my life. The landlord, who seemed a sound fellow, brought me a three-handled quart pot of beer to begin with and presently set down before me (for in those days they let you carve for yourself) a great piece of pink and brown cold boiled beef—topside and silverside together—that stood about three feet high. Anyway I could only just carve it in comfort standing up. I accepted mustard but rejected pickles—even pickled onions—and I think that found favour with the landlord. For when I had carved and eaten about three pounds of this perfect stuff—it carved as if it wished to be eaten and it ate as “crisp” as Lamb’s roast hare—he came in again to see how I was getting on, and what I would like further. “No pudding,” I said, “not even an apple tart. But I think I might, in a minute or two, manage, with the help of another quart of beer, a bit of good English cheese—a bit of double Gloucester, say?”

“I’ve a good double Gloucester just cut,” he said, “though it was made in Wiltshire and all the better for that. But not yet, sir—you aren’t done yet, surely?” “I’m afraid I am,” I said sadly, “I’d like to go on eating that beef—but—”

“Ah,” said he, putting his head a little on one side, “p’raps not, but what d’ye say,” and he bent towards me and his voice took on that winning inflection that I imagine was the secret of the Siren’s song, “what d’ye say to a cold partridge?”

Well, I said “Yes,” blushing. And I ate it—and some of the double Gloucester afterwards, and I went on that afternoon right down to Rushey Lock—a tremendous day. Do you wonder I have marked the day with a large white stone?

It is these relatively unimportant touches inserted here and there in the narrative that make the story (you *are* writing a story, and a true story) so real to the reader, and makes him long to have been with

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you and shared with you the adventures that come to every traveller.

That, briefly, is how I suggest you should start your travel-writing. The idea is just as easily applied to your longer expeditions, whether they last for months or years.

So many globe-trotters treat each place they visit as something to be ticked off in a guide-book, as something seen and done, and their books reflect this deadly attitude.

Instead of broadening the mind, this sort of travel, as Stella Benson says :—

Shrinks and fades the mind as an inferior laundry shrinks and fades the silks that are so bright and ample when we wear them first. People who want to keep their minds broad, flexible and bright, should stay at home.

This may sound to you both shocking and untrue. But Stella Benson was a great traveller, and must have met hundreds of travellers to whom her words apply quite literally. And Stella Benson's opinion is corroborated by that of H. M. Tomlinson, another traveller of great experience :—

"Travel," he says, "we are often told, gives light to the mind. I have wondered whether it does. Consider the sailors. They are supposed to travel widely. They see the cities of the world, and the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. And—well, do you know any sailors? If you do, then you may have noticed that not infrequently their opinions seem hardly more valuable than yours and mine. They rarely claim an additional value for their opinions because they have anchored off Colombo. They know, very likely, that all the cities of the world can no more give us what was withheld at

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our birth than our unaided suburb. The sad truth is, one is as likely to grow wiser during a week-end at Brighton as in a black Bilbao tramp.

That may be true, but you know as well as I do that of two people in a room you will find the man who has sailed in a black Bilbao tramp the one you want to talk to rather than the man who is just home from a week-end at Brighton.

This may be due to a sort of snobbery. Nobody boasts of having friends in Balham or Northampton, but I have often noticed that people are proud of saying that they have a son just home from Tahiti or San Francisco.

Distance, it may be illogically, does lend an enchantment to the view.

But just as some people look more attractive from a distance, so do certain places, so it is unwise to expect that Naples is much more impressive than Weymouth. The truth is that you will explore places abroad much grander than anything you will see in England, but the further away you go the more you will realise that for quiet loveliness no place can compare with England.

There is this further point.

The best things in travel are always the unexpected. You have to learn to let things happen to you. Adventure is like happiness, always coming on you when you least expect it, running away from you when you chase it.

In the earliest days no distinction was drawn between what was actual and what was imaginary, which explains why Herodotus was so vastly entertaining, but not exactly reliable.

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In our own language the earliest readable travel-writer was Sir John Mandeville, whose veracity may be gauged from this extract :—

THE KINGDOM NAMED MANCY

In this lande no man goeth a begging, for there is no pore man, and there men have beardes of heare as it were cats. In this lande are fair women, and therefore some men call that land Albany, for the white folke, and there is a citie that men call Latorim, and it is greater than Paris. And in that land are birdes twice greater than they be here. . . . In this country are whyte hennes, and they bear no feathers but wool as shepe doe in our lande. . . .

From this citie men go by many journeys to an other citie that is called Cassay, that is the fairest citie in the worlde, and that citie is fifty mile about and there is in that city more than xii principall gates without. From thence within three myle is an other great citie, and within this citie are more than xii thousand bridges, and upon each bridge is a strong toure where the keepers dwell to kepe it against the great Caane, for it bordereth on his land. And on one side of the citie runneth a great river. . . .

And men go upon the river till they come to an Abbey of Monkes a lyttle from the citie, and in that Abbey is a great gardeine, and therein is many manner of trees of divers fruits, in that gardein are divers kindes of beastes, as Baboons, Apes, Marmosets and other, and when the convent have eaten, a monke taketh that which is left and beareth it into the gardeine, and smiteth once with a bell of silver which he holdeth in his hand. Anone come out these beastes that I speake of and many nere ii or iii thousand, and he giveth them to eate from faire vessels of silver, and when they have eaten he smyteth the bell againe and they go away. And the monke sayth that those beasts are soules of men that are dead, and those beastes that are fayre are soules of

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Lordes and other rich men, and those that are foule beastes are soules of other commons. . . .

Then come men to a citie that is called Chibens, and there was the first sege of the King of Mancy. In this citie are lx brydges of stone as fayre as they may be.

Over-statement and exaggeration were the faults of the earliest travellers. The travellers of our day get their effects by under-statements and under-tones.

To judge from Peter Fleming, you would think that there were no hazards in life left.

He describes his travels in the interior of China as "a superficial account of an unsensational journey." He knows very well that it is neither superficial nor unsensational. But that is the modern method, a sort of inverted bragging.

Peter Fleming dashes off to the interior of Brazil in search of Colonel Fawcett solely on the strength of an advertisement in the Agony Column of *The Times*. He is quite right. That is the way to find adventure. For all true travel entails hazard and discomfort.

Think of Marco Polo.

As a boy of fifteen in the year 1269 he was taken by his father from his home in Venice across the deserts of Tartary, and thence to the palace of the mighty Kubla Khan at Shangtu in China. He was there employed upon delicate missions to Thibet and Burma. But it was not till twenty-three years after that he was allowed to return to Venice, and then only because he was chosen as escort for the lovely seventeen-year-old Kukachin, the bride chosen for the Khan of Persia.

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Marco Polo sailed with her from China in 1292, and it took them two years to get to Persia by sea, and they lost 600 men on the way. When they got there the Khan was dead, so Kukachin had to be contented with his son, and Marco Polo at last got home, where nobody recognised him. He was later taken prisoner in a sea-battle by the Genoese, and spent his time in prison dictating his experiences to another prisoner. He lived until he was seventy.

He was the first man to trace a route across Asia, the first to describe the Court at Pekin, the first to describe China, Thibet, Japan, India, Siberia and the Arctic. Here is his description of the Grand Khan's Court :—

At each door of the grand hall, or of whatever part the Grand Khan happens to be in, stand two officers, of a gigantic figure, one on each side, with staves in their hands, for the purpose of preventing persons from touching the threshold with their feet, and obliging them to step beyond it. If by chance any one is guilty of this offence, these janitors take from him his garment, which he must redeem for money ; or, when they do not take the garment, they inflict on him such number of blows as they have authority for doing. But, as strangers may be unacquainted with the prohibition, officers are appointed to introduce them, by whom they are warned of it ; and this precaution is used because touching the threshold is there regarded as a bad omen. In departing from the hall, as some of the company may be affected by the liquor, it is impossible to guard against the accident, and the order is not then strictly enforced.

The numerous persons who attend at the sideboard of his majesty, and who serve him with victuals and drink, are all obliged to cover their noses and mouths with handsome veils or cloths of worked silk, in order that his victuals or his wine may not be affected by their

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breath. When drink is called for by him, and the page in waiting has presented it, he retires three paces and kneels down, upon which the courtiers, and all who are present, in like manner make their prostration. At the same moment all the musical instruments, of which there is a numerous band, begin to play, and continue to do so until he has ceased drinking, when all the company recover their posture ; and this reverential salutation is made so often as his majesty drinks.

Now when you are writing of your travels, you may not be visiting the Court of the Grand Khan, but there will most certainly be habits and customs around you that will be different from those at home. These are some of the things you will have to ferret out (if they are not obvious at a first glance), and record faithfully and clearly.

The first Englishman to write a book of authenticated travels was Richard Hakluyt, a Herefordshire man, who was born about 1553, and educated at Westminster and Christ Church.

He has given a most interesting account of how he became seized with the desire to become a writer of travels.

I do remember that being a youth, and one of Her Majesty's scholars at Westminster, it was my hap to visit Richard Hakluyt my cousin, at a time when I found lying open upon his board certain books of Cosmography with an universal map ; he seeing me somewhat curious in the view thereof, began to instruct my ignorance, by shewing me the division of the earth into three parts after the old account and then according to the latter and better distribution into more ; he pointed with his wand to all the known Seas, Gulfs, Bays Straits, Capes, Rivers, Empires, Kingdoms, Dukedoms and Territories of each part, with declaration also of

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their special commodities, and particular wants, which by the benefit of traffick, and intercourse of merchants, are plentifully supplied. From the map he brought me to the Bible—turning to the 107th Psalm, directed me to the 23rd and 24th verses where I read that they which go down to the sea in ships and occupy by the great waters, they see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. Which words of the Prophet together with my cousin's discourse (things of high and rare delight to my young nature) took in me so deep an impression that I constantly resolved, if ever I were preferred to the University, where better times and more convenient place might be ministered to these studies, I would by God's assistance prosecute that knowledge and kind of literature, the doors whereof (after a sort) were so happily opened before me.

Hakluyt's book was called "The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffics and Discoveries of the English Nation," and it appeared most appropriately the year after the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

In it he tells the story of the Armada, the North-west Passage, of the first landing in Virginia, and of all the great voyages of Drake, Hawkins, Willoughby and Burrough.

Here is his description of John Davis's report on his search for the North-west Passage :—

In my first voyage not experienced of the nature of those climates, and having no direction either by Chart, Globe, or other certain relation in what altitude that passage was to be searched, I shaped a Northerly course and so sought the same toward the South, and in that my Northerly course I fell upon the shore which in ancient time was called Groenland, five hundred leagues distant from the Durseys Westnorthwest Northerly, the land being very high and full of mighty mountains all

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covered with snow, no view of wood, grass or earth to be seen, and the shore two leagues off into the sea so full of ice as that no shipping could by any means come near the same. The lothsome view of the shore, and the irksome noise of the ice was such, as that it bred strange conceits among us, so that we supposed the place to be waste and void of any sensible or vegetable creatures, whereupon I called the same Desolation. . . .

(After) thirty leagues sailing upon the West side of this coast by me named Desolation, we were past all the ice and found many green and pleasant Isles bordering upon the shore, but the hills of the mainland were still covered with great quantities of snow. . . .

The people of the country having espied our ships came down unto us in their canoes, and holding up their right hand to the sun and crying *Iliaout*, would strike their breasts; we doing the like the people came aboard our shippes, men of good stature, unbearded, small eyed and of tractable conditions, by whom as signs would permit, we understood that towards the North and West there was a great sea, and using the people with kindness in giving them nails and knives which of all things they most desired, we departed, and finding the sea free from ice supposing ourselves to be past all dangers we shaped our course Westnorthwest thinking thereby to pass for China, but in the latitude of sixty-six degrees we fell with another shore, and there found another passage of twenty leagues broad directly West into the same, which we supposed to be our hoped strait, we entered into the same thirty or forty leagues, finding it neither to widen nor straighten, then considering that the year was spent (for this was the end of August) not knowing the length of the strait and the dangers thereof, we took it our best course to return with notice of our good success for this small time of search.

Hakluyt is an exceedingly difficult book to put down once you start dipping into it, but none of his stories excels that of Drake's voyage round the world,

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with its poignant account of the mutiny and execution of his dear friend Thomas Doughty.

In the next century William Dampier, a Somerset man, takes up the tale, and if you are interested in the history of buccaneering and privateering, Dampier is undoubtedly your man.

A much less questionable explorer was Mungo Park, a young Scots ship's doctor, who was imprisoned by a Moorish Chief during his efforts to discover the Niger, which he found and followed for eighty miles before being forced to turn back and follow it for 300 miles in a state of complete exhaustion.

In 1805 he went back with the determination to find its source or die.

He had only a canoe, three slaves and three European soldiers, one of whom was mad. After covering 1,000 miles the canoe stuck on a rock, and, being attacked by natives, Park dived into the river that he had discovered, and was drowned.

Here is his account of his crossing the desert :—

My thirst was by this time become insufferable ; my mouth was parched and inflamed ; a sudden dimness would frequently come over my eyes, with other symptoms of fainting ; and my horse being very much fatigued, I began seriously to apprehend that I should perish of thirst. To relieve the burning pain in my mouth and throat I chewed the leaves of different shrubs, but found them all bitter, and of no service.

A little before sunset, having reached the top of a gentle rising, I climbed a high tree, from the topmost branches of which I cast a melancholy look over the barren wilderness, but without discovering the most distant trace of a human dwelling. The same dismal uniformity of shrubs and sand everywhere presented

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itself, and the horizon was as level and uninterrupted as that of the sea.

Descending from the tree, I found my horse devouring the stubble and brushwood with great avidity ; and as I was now too faint to attempt walking, and my horse too much fatigued to carry me, I thought it but an act of humanity, and perhaps the last I should ever have it in my power to perform, to take off his bridle and let him shift for himself ; in doing so I was suddenly affected with sickness and giddiness, and falling upon the sand, felt as if the hour of death was fast approaching. “ Here then (thought I) after a short but ineffectual struggle, terminate all my hopes of being useful in my day and generation ; here must the short span of my life come to an end.” I cast (as I believed) a last look on the surrounding scene, and whilst I reflected on the awful change that was about to take place, this world, with its enjoyments, seemed to vanish from my recollection. Nature, however, at length resumed its functions ; and on recovering my senses, I found myself stretched upon the sand, with the bridle still in my hand, and the sun just sinking behind the trees. I now summoned all my resolution, and determined to make another effort to prolong my existence. And as the evening was somewhat cool, I resolved to travel as far as my limbs would carry me, in hopes of reaching (my only resource) a watering-place. With this view, I put the bridle on my horse, and driving him before me, went slowly along for about an hour, when I perceived some lightning from the north-east, a most delightful sight, for it promised rain. The darkness and lightning increased very rapidly, and in less than an hour I heard the wind roaring among the bushes. I had already opened my mouth to receive the refreshing drops which I expected ; but I was instantly covered with a cloud of sand, driven with such force by the wind as to give a very disagreeable sensation to my face and arms, and I was obliged to mount my horse, and stop under a bush to prevent being suffocated. The sand continued to fly in amazing

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quantities for near an hour, after which I again set forward, and travelled with difficulty until ten o'clock. About this time I was agreeably surprised by some very vivid flashes of lightning, followed by a few heavy drops of rain. In a little time the sand ceased to fly, and I alighted and spread out all my clean clothes to collect the rain, which at length I saw would certainly fall. For more than an hour it rained plentifully, and I quenched my thirst by wringing and sucking my clothes.

By way of contrast with Mungo Park's experiences of the desert, read this extract from A. W. Kinglake's "Eothen" :—

The endless sands yield nothing but small stunted shrubs : even these fail after the first two or three days, and from that time you pass over broad plains—you pass over newly-reared hills—you pass through valleys dug out by the last week's storm—and the hills and the valleys are sand, sand, sand, still sand, and only sand, and sand and sand again. The earth is so samely that your eyes turn towards heaven—the sky. You look to the sun, for he is your taskmaster. You are veiled and shrouded, but you know where he shines overhead by the touch of his flaming sword. No words are spoken, but your Arabs moan, your camels sigh, your skin glows, your shoulders ache, and for sights you see the pattern and the web of the silk that veils your eyes, and the glare of the outer light. Time labours on—your skin glows, your shoulders ache, your Arabs moan, your camels sigh, and you see the same pattern in the silk and the same glare of light beyond ; but time marches on and by and by the descending sun now softly touches your right arm, and you look again upon his face, for his power is all veiled in his beauty and the redness of flames has become the redness of roses : the world about you is all your own and there, where you will, you pitch your solitary tent.

That is about as satisfactory a piece of travel-

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writing as a I know. It makes you almost begin to try and rub the sand out of your eyes.

A more prosaic writer than Kinglake and almost as brave a man as Mungo Park, was the naturalist from Leicestershire, Henry Walter Bates. His book is called "The Naturalist on the Amazons."

He stayed on the Amazon for eleven years, enduring great privations, and in that time collected 14,712 species, of which 8,000 were before that time unknown.

It was reading Bates that sent H. M. Tomlinson on the voyage which he describes so vividly in "The Sea and the Jungle" :—

"One bitter and northerly Easter," says Mr. Tomlinson, "I read, because gardening was impossible, Bates' '*Naturalist on the Amazons*.' The famous illustration of that spectacled entomologist in trousers and a check shirt, standing with an insect net in a tropical forest, surrounded by infuriated Toucans, fixed me when casually I pulled the volume off a library shelf.

"The book had not been specially commended to me, but its effect was instant, and the picture that artful naturalist drew of the pleasures of Para, when contrasted with the sleet of an English spring, made me pensive over a fire. I had never seen the tropics. And what a name it is, the Amazons. And what a delightful book is Bates'."

So it does not seem to matter whether you set out to discover a river or a rare insect, a north-west passage or a way across China, if you have the right traveller's eye things will happen to you, and what you see will prove both an inspiration and entertainment to those who come after you.

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But, as I said, it is not necessary to go so far afield as Africa or America for your travels.

William Hazlitt tells us how to get the best out of travelling anywhere :—

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey ; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room ; but out of doors nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

The fields his study, nature was his book.

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedge-rows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room and fewer encumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude ; nor do I ask for

A friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do, just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences ; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where contemplation

May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled and sometimes impair'd,

that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a postchaise or in a Tilbury, to exchange good things with, and vary the same stale topics over

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again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking ! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like “sunken wrack and sumless treasures,” burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull common-places, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do ; but I had sometimes rather be without them. “Leave, oh, leave me to my repose !” I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me ‘very stuff o’ the conscience.’ Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment ? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald ?

There is a great deal to be said for going alone. It means that you learn to know yourself. You learn to be self-reliant. You learn to enjoy life without having to lean on other people all the time.

One of the best of all travellers was Robert Louis Stevenson, who was both alone and ailing when he undertook his famous “Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes.” He teaches us many things about travel, to go slowly (he only covered 120 miles in twelve days), to go alone (by which I mean without human companionship ; a donkey, dog or horse is admirable company of course), and to sleep out.

We all keep on making resolutions to sleep out, and by not doing so miss half the fun and half the

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beauty of life. Listen to Stevenson's reaction to sleeping out of doors :—

Night is a dead, monotonous period under a roof : but in the open world it passes lightly, with its stars and dews and perfumes, and the hours are marked by changes in the face of nature. What seems a kind of death to people choked between walls and curtains is only a light and living slumber to the man who sleeps in the fields.

All night long he can hear nature breathing deeply and freely : even as she takes her rest, she turns and smiles : and there is one stirring hour unknown to those who dwell in houses when a wakeful influence goes abroad over the sleeping hemisphere.

It is then that the cock first crows, not to announce the dawn, but like a cheerful watchman speeding the course of night. Cattle awake on the meadows ; sheep break their fast on dewy hillsides, and change to a new lair among the ferns ; and houseless men, who have lain down with the fowls, open their dim eyes and behold the beauty of the night.

When that hour came to me among the pines I wakened thirsty. I emptied my tin of water in a draught. The stars were clear, coloured, and jewel-like, but not frosty. A faint silvery vapour stood for the Milky Way. All around me the black fir-trees stood upright and stock-still. By the whiteness of the pack-saddle I could see the donkey walking round and round at the length of her tether : I could hear her steadily munching the grass ; but there was not another sound, save the quiet talk of the brook over the stones. A faint wind, more like a moving coolness than a stream of air, passed down the glade from time to time, so that even in my great chamber the air was being renewed all night long. I thought with horror of the inn at Chasseradès and the congregated night-caps ; with horror of the nocturnal prowesses of clerks and students, of hot theatres and pass-keys and close rooms. I have not often enjoyed a more serene possession of myself, nor felt

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more independent of material aids. The outer world, from which we cower into our houses, seemed after all a gentle habitable place ; and night after night a man's bed, it seemed, was laid and waiting for him in the fields, where God keeps an open house. I thought I had rediscovered one of those truths which are revealed to savages and hid from political economists : at the least, I had discovered a new pleasure for myself. And yet even while I was exulting in my solitude I became aware of a strange lack. I wished a companion to lie near me in the starlight, silent and not moving, but ever within touch. For there is a fellowship more quiet even than solitude, and which, rightly understood, is solitude made perfect. And to live out of doors with the woman a man loves is of all lives the most complete and free.

As I thus lay, between content and longing, a faint noise stole towards me thro' the pines. I thought, at first, it was the crowing of cocks, or the barking of dogs at some very distant farm ; but steadily it took shape in my ears, until I became aware that a passenger was going by upon the high-road in the valley, and singing loudly as he went. There was more of good-will than grace in his performance ; but he trolled with ample lungs ; and the sound of his voice took hold upon the hillside and set the air shaking in the leafy glens. I have heard people passing by night in sleeping cities ; some of them sang ; one, I remember, played loudly on the bagpipes. I have heard the rattle of a cart or carriage spring up suddenly after hours of stillness, and pass, for some minutes, within the range of my hearing as I lay abed. There is a romance about all who are abroad in the black hours, and with something of a thrill we try to guess their business. But here the romance was double : first, in this glad passenger sending his voice up in a wail thro' the night ; and then I, on the other hand, buckled into my sack, and smoking alone in the pine-woods between four and five thousand feet toward the stars.

That's what I call good travel-writing. It is

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fresh. It paints a vivid and real picture, and it makes us want to go and do what Stevenson did, for the dark isn't a thing to be afraid of, but to go adventuring in.

And Stevenson reminds us of another most important thing about travel. It's not the destination that matters, but the journey, and the way we travel.

We're much more careful of our skins than our forefathers were.

We're much more insistent about comfort.

We do very much need to get back some of the spirit of Fortinbras "greatly to find quarrel in a straw when honour's at the stake," or of the spirit of Sir Claud Schuster, the mountaineer :—

It all sounds aimless. I had worn two holes in the knees of my breeches, broken my flask, rubbed the skin off my fingers, slept on a most uncomfortable stone, incurred a certain, not very great, amount of risk, carried my body up 9,390 feet and as many down. I cannot tell what had made of those prosaic happenings an adventure of surpassing value. The glorious heat of noonday, the majesty of the night, the marching stars, the wide vision, the suggestion of peril, the rhythmic movement of the body, the fellowship, the toil, the attainment—all these together make some new and precious thing which lives in us and with us till thought and feeling die.

From every point of view to teach yourself how to live as well as how to write, you will be wise to read as many travellers' tales as you can lay your hands on.

"The reason that so few good books are written," said Walter Bagehot, "is that so few people who

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write know anything.” And it is true that the finest spirits do not write. They act. But the traveller both acts and writes.

He takes risks, he knows what he is doing, and for the sake of posterity he writes down what he has done.

So read F. S. Smythe on Everest, Courtauld on Greenland, Captain Scott on the South Pole, T. E. Lawrence and Doughty on Arabia.

Learn to read maps and to make them. Learn, as Samuel Butler learnt, in “Alps and Sanctuaries,” to illustrate your own journeys. Teach yourself to draw.

Somehow acquire a copy of a book called “The Happy Traveller” by Frank Tatchell. That will give you all the practical advice you need about travelling.

To write about your travels will depend upon two things, your ability to see what is happening all round you, and your capacity to select the most entertaining of these happenings.

The distance that you are from home is immaterial. Gilbert White didn’t have to move out of his own village of Selborne, and Richard Jefferies and W. H. Hudson were at their best on a small strip of the chalk downs that anybody can climb.

You needn’t wait till you’ve made a fortune, or till you have months of leisure.

John Gibbons wrote a first-rate book by setting out to walk to Lourdes on no money and without a word of French.

The only thing that stands in the way of being a good traveller is poverty of spirit.

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CHAPTER VI

F I C T I O N

Telling a Story

I HAVE been writing fiction ever since I can remember, and I have been playing cricket ever since I can remember, but though I know most of the rules of both, I don't often bring off a scoring stroke, and I have still to achieve a story that satisfies me.

In some respects story-writers and cricketers, like poets, are born, not made. Practice is excellent, but practice, I must warn you, does not make perfect, or I should be perfect. I never stop practising. There is something extra required, not necessarily genius, but a sort of divine intuition which makes the good story-teller seize on the dramatic possibilities of a situation and bring out the essentials.

I shouldn't, if I were you, bother about the length of the story you are going to write. Some of the finest stories in the world have been the longest ; "The Brothers Karamazov" and "War and Peace," for example.

Some of the finest stories in the world have been the shortest ; "Ethan Frome" and "The Country of the Blind," for instance.

I don't believe that a long story is easier or more

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difficult. Certain stories better fit a small frame, just as some people are tall and others short.

But if your patience is fairly easily exhausted, and your interest in the development of character not profound, it is probably wiser to start with a short story.

This will probably mean taking one odd incident that you may have read about in the paper or seen.

You should certainly keep a notebook in which to jot down any ideas that occur to you, because the most unlikely ones have an unexpected habit of fermenting just like yeast, and producing a real good yarn. A kind of story-writing that is very popular just now is the reconstruction of well-known murders.

This is fairly easy, in so far as most of the story is already written for you. All you have to do is to try to get right inside the mind of the murderer to make his mentality and motive clear. The success of your story lies in making him an understandable if not a sympathetic character. Mr. Gerald Bullett has made a most thrilling story out of the lives of the several members of the jury convened to try a murderer. Their various reactions to the crime depend naturally very much upon their own private lives. It is a clever trick, and one that is being extensively used in plays, films and novels, to take such a group of people as a jury thrown together by accident and tracing their private tragedies and triumphs for a few hours or days.

It started with Elizabeth Jennings' one-act play called "Five Birds in a Cage," which depicted the situation of five people stuck in a lift. It went on with Vicki Baum's "Grand Hotel," a novel (after-

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wards adapted into a play and a film) in which the plot is woven round the fortunes of the hall-porter and a handful of visitors unrelated until they meet in the hotel.

A recent film, "Four Hours to Kill," carries on this idea. The scene is a cinema house during a performance, and the plot is intricate.

Again a lot of unrelated people are brought together. A very nervous man keeps on rushing to the telephone to see how his wife in childbirth is getting on. The cloak-room attendant is having a row with his fiancée, who has discovered that he has been running round with another girl of very unpleasant character. A man charged with murder is handcuffed to a detective, and spends the last four hours of his life trying to decoy the man who betrayed him into coming to the theatre.

It is one of the most thrilling films I have ever seen, and the technique was thoroughly justified.

The way you tell a story matters tremendously. Are you going to tell it in the first person or the third? The first is more direct, and it so happens that perhaps the world's most famous twenty novels have all been told in the first person. There is "Treasure Island," "David Copperfield," "Kidnapped," "The Thirty-Nine Steps," "Gulliver's Travels," "Pilgrim's Progress," "Jane Eyre," "Lorna Doone," "Lavengro," "Coral Island," "Robinson Crusoe" and "Peter Simple."

On the other hand one of the world's greatest story-tellers, Joseph Conrad, got his effects by making his narrative as oblique and indirect as possible.

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In "Lord Jim" the story is narrated by another character, Marlowe, who tells it to Conrad, who tells it to us.

There are times when this very indirect method seems unnecessarily cumbersome.

And it is a mark of the amateur to let the machinery creak enough to make the reader conscious of the creaking.

On the stage a play is good if it makes you believe in it, and most decidedly not good if you are conscious all the time that it is a play.

Plausibility is the first rule of the dramatist and of the novelist; even when it is purely fantastic, like "Gulliver's Travels," it must be plausible. But even plausibility is not enough.

According to Mr. Somerset Maugham, who is one of the master craftsmen of our time, the three essentials of good writing are lucidity, euphony and simplicity, and he reminds us that these three things seldom come from a happy accident of nature; for the most part they are achieved by intensive training and assiduous labour. "It is only by practice that the writer learns to stick to his point, and it is only by practice that he learns how to present his theme with order, balance and succinctness."

The book from which I have taken this sentence, "Don Fernando," will give you a valuable clue to the novelist's method, the pains he goes to in securing the right *milieu*, the trouble he takes in selecting a theme which he can treat sympathetically.

Most of us are too easily satisfied with what we write, and do not burn enough. It is one of the

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hardest things in the world deliberately to destroy one's own work, but it makes it slightly easier perhaps, if we recollect that the actual writing may have sweated out some of the bad blood that is in us and that the sooner that is out of the way for ever the better.

But whether it comes easily or whether it doesn't, it is a safe working rule to destroy the greater part of what you write.

An author must not only be fastidious, he must be quite ruthless.

I speak with knowledge and feeling on this point, because I have allowed a great deal of inferior work to pass from the necessity of having to earn my bread and butter.

In an ideal life the author would, of course, be subsidised by the State, and give out only what is best in him.

Indeed, some far-sighted publishers do carry a few salaried authors in whose work they have faith, and give them enough to keep them unharassed in order that they may be free to work. This does not necessarily lead every author to give of his best, because it often happens that the best work is done under the most harrowing conditions.

A poet, you would think, would be most inspired when he is most carefree and happy.

It does not work that way. Extreme misery is at least as potent a factor in bringing out genius as extreme happiness.

But whether you are happy or whether you are miserable, there comes a time when you feel an irresistible urge to write, to create character.

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It is well if the urge finds you prepared. So practise even when you feel no inspiration.

Anthony Trollope made his writing so much a part of his regular life, that he wrote with watch or clock in front of him with the same tenacity of purpose that a road-walker passes a milestone every quarter of an hour. Anthony Trollope wrote 250 words while you and I walk a mile, and he kept up this average consistently through the creation of "Bar-chester Towers."

Such regularity should cure us of laziness, and I suppose laziness is the besetting sin of all authors, despite the evidence given to the contrary by Arnold Bennett, J. B. Priestley and Edgar Wallace.

Dr. Johnson, who always strikes us as one of the busiest of men, was always fighting against the temptation to be lazy, and I find that I compile notebook after notebook of bright ideas, but fail to follow them up.

One of the major troubles in writing fiction lies in keeping one's characters in order. Unless you are very careful they are apt to take the bit between their teeth, and get out of hand.

Human nature is full of odd whims and vagaries that are not all pleasant, but you must in a work of art have consistency, and your characters must ring true.

And you will not achieve artistic truth unless you see your characters quite clearly in the round.

It is much easier to let them develop as they like. It is difficult but essential to the success of your work that they shall develop as you like.

By this I do not mean that they must be neces-

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sarily likeable characters. It is much easier to arouse enthusiasm for the wayward than for the godly, and incidentally much easier to create a villain than a hero.

Few things are harder than to create a simple, godly, lovable character.

The young heroines of "National Velvet," and of Hilda Vaughan's "The Curtain Rises," are much more difficult to make convincing than Becky Sharp.

It is fault in the character, not perfection, that gives the story-teller his chance, and this may partly explain the interest that practically everyone takes in a murderer, whether in fiction or in fact.

It is perhaps just as well that imperfection (within limits) pleases, because a great many novels have a strong autobiographical flavour, and though we may not flatter ourselves in our self-portraits, we like to think that our readers feel sympathetic towards us.

We used to hear a good deal about the relative value of the subjective and the objective in writing fiction, and it was said that the objective writer, the man who kept himself completely out of the picture, was the greater artist.

It is easy to see the reason for this hasty judgment.

Nearly everyone in his first novel tells his own life-story.

Alec Waugh's "The Loom of Youth," an account of his own schooldays at Sherborne, very thinly disguised, led to a flood of stories in the same vein.

Compton Mackenzie's "Sinister Street" had been in earlier years a more interesting essay in the same vein.

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Obviously it is easier to remember than to create, but not one person in ten thousand possesses Mr. Mackenzie's amazingly retentive memory of his own childhood.

The fact is that some fiction is over-coloured by personal experience. In others the experience has been translated in the crucible of the imagination from something personal to something universal. You cannot write of what you do not know.

Thomas Hardy was a purely objective author, but he selected from legend, hearsay, gossip or casual conversation some story that specially appealed to his nature, and he furthermore made his characters play their dramas in a countryside that is so easily recognisable that practically every village he mentions has been identified.

The very fact that you can easily distinguish between the novels of, say, Jane Austen and George Meredith is a proof of a novel's autobiographical quality. The style is indeed the man.

Jane Austen's style is light, precise, dry, polished, as Dickens's style is wayward, heavy and boisterous. The character emerges inevitably in the writing. If you are vulgar, vulgarity will appear in your work. You cannot escape from yourself, however objective you try to be.

Conrad was about as objective as any novelist who ever lived. Yet he confessed that every novel was in a sense autobiographical. He wrote about the sea and the East, because he knew and loved the sea and the East.

Rudyard Kipling is purely objective, by which I mean that you could guess nothing about his

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private life from his stories, but you could not help seeing how romantic he finds India, and how much he likes the private soldier and able-bodied seaman.

The author of "Puck of Pook's Hill" is obviously a great lover of his own land, caring deeply for the continuity of its tradition. He is also a great lover of engines.

So you see that even in the most objective writers personality keeps on breaking in. Indeed it is impossible to hope to be a great author unless you have a personality to express. You subdue it to your medium, but it keeps on making itself felt.

Before you start your story, you have to decide on the kind of action you wish to use, spiritual or mechanical.

Among the older novels the greatest favourites were undoubtedly those in which the characters were kept on the move.

In "Don Quixote" the interest lies in the travel. In "Pilgrim's Progress" the interest lies in Christian's journey through the wilderness of this world. In "Robinson Crusoe" we are transported to a deserted island, and, of course, in "Treasure Island." In "Huckleberry Finn" we go voyaging down the Mississippi. In "Tom Jones" we dash all over eighteenth-century England. In "Pickwick Papers" we never settle down anywhere for five minutes.

Only in Jane Austen's novels do we ever stay in the same house for a couple of hundred pages.

Yet the excitement in "Emma" and "Persuasion" is no less intense than it is in "The New-

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comes." There is action of the mind no less than action of the body.

Perhaps the most brilliant of our contemporary novelists is Virginia Woolf. In her novels the characters scarcely move at all. In "To the Lighthouse" the whole action is taken up with a family preparing to visit a lighthouse.

The action is purely spiritual. What excites the reader is the development of character, watching how the hero or heroine stands the strain of adversity, improves or deteriorates under changed circumstances.

You are not, of course, in a story limited to one age, one country, or even to an interpretation of life as we know it at all.

You can project yourself into the world of the future, as H. G. Wells used to, and create the imaginary world of 2936 A.D. You can throw yourself back into the past and try to reconstruct the conditions under which Mary Queen of Scots lived. This has been admirably done by Maurice Hewlett in "The Queen's Quair."

Historical romance has never been better written than it has been in our time by D. K. Broster, Margaret Irwin, Marjorie Bowen, M. F. H. Prescott, Naomi Mitchison, Ford Madox Ford and Neil Munro.

Sir Walter Scott took too long to get into his stride to suit our modern taste, but he gave a grand lead to the romanticists of which they have taken full advantage.

You may write pure fantasy after the manner of Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows," to

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me one of the most entrancing books ever written, or Hans Andersen, though I think fantasy is very dangerous ground when I think how easily even the expert falls heavily to the ground.

There are passages in Sir James Barrie that make us shiver with ecstasy, but there are also passages that make us shiver with disgust.

Fantastic writers are apt to fail in a sense of what is fit and right.

The type of story that you are most likely to write is an interpretation not of the men in the moon in the far future or the men under the sea in ages past, but of those around you here and now.

It is life as we and our neighbours live it that is the stuff of which the best stories are written.

To write these successfully demands an eye that is unusually observant, and a nature that finds all men interesting. You are not expected to take photographs of your contemporaries. You are interpreting an age.

You may be as buoyant and happy as J. B. Priestley, as bitter as Aldous Huxley, as witty as Eric Linklater, as intricate as Henry James, as forthright as John Buchan.

All that matters is that you should hold up the mirror to nature and be accounted a faithful witness.

You will be wise not to neglect the economic factor.

Most story-writers in their haste to describe the love affairs of their hero and heroine, forget their financial affairs, which have a most important bearing on their actions.

Let your readers know not only what your

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characters eat and wear, but how they get the money to pay for their food and clothes.

In this age we have a very special interest in the finances of our heroes and heroines.

There are still over two million of unemployed, and in addition to the sympathy that we all naturally feel for them, there lurks the curiosity to find out how they manage to carry on with life at all. Walter Greenwood in "Love on the Dole" and Walter Brierley in "Means Test Man," have both helped us to understand the peculiar misery of trying to live on inadequate insurance benefit. The rich are much less interesting.

Perhaps the most interesting people in the world are those who seem the most ordinary. Read, if you get a chance, R. C. Sherriff's "A Fortnight in September," and you will see how a good storyteller can rouse us to a pitch of excitement over such an ordinary occurrence as that of a suburban family going off to Bognor for the annual holiday.

The success of your story will depend not upon its extravagance, its brutality or love scenes, its ugliness or its beauty, but upon the amount of actuality you can breathe into it. If it is like life, it will be a good story.

But above all things get a good start. It is of the first importance in a race, and it is of the first importance in a story.

Arrest your reader's attention on the first page, and you have gone a long way to keep it altogether.

I call *this* a good start. It's the opening of "Kidnapped."

"I will begin the story of my adventures with a

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certain morning early in the month of June, the year of grace 1751, when I took the key for the last time out of the door of my father's house."

That's good because you know from the start that you're in for an adventure, and you've got your hero on the move in the first three lines. "On a dark and stormy night in late November." That's the way to begin a story.

It is quite remarkable how many first-rate books begin like this : "I was born in the year 1800 in the town of Newnham-on-Severn in Gloucestershire." And off we go. That's the start of "Jim Davis."

But having got a good start, don't, like a bad runner, keep looking over your shoulder to see how you're getting on. Having got going, keep going *forward* all the time. Concentrate mainly on the things, the exciting things that are going to happen. You've got to make the reader first believe that he is there, and secondly be as excited as if he were himself being chased.

You've got to have descriptions, of course, but keep them short and keep them vivid. Here's as good an example of a description of a man as I know. It's the beginning of "Treasure Island."

I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow : a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man : his long pig-tail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat : his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails ; and the sabre-cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often

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afterwards ; in the old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars :

“ Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest.
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum ! ”

Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a handspike that he carried, until my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum.

That is a good description because the man comes to life before your eyes, partly because of his scar, and partly because of his song.

And what follows is even better, and notice now how the conversation helps you to see them :—

About three o’clock of a bitter, foggy, frosty afternoon I was standing at the door when I saw someone drawing slowly near along the road. He was plainly blind, for he tapped before him with a stick, and wore a great green shade over his eyes and nose ; and he was hunched, as if with age or weakness, and wore a huge old tattered sea-cloak with a hood, that made him appear positively deformed. I never saw in my life a more dreadful-looking figure. He stopped a little from the inn, and raising his voice in an odd sing-song, addressed the air in front of him :

“ Will any kind friend inform a poor blind man who has lost the precious sight of his eyes in the gracious defence of his native country, England, and God bless King George ! where or in what part of this country he may now be ? ”

“ You are at the ‘ Admiral Benbow,’ Black Hill Cove, my good man.”

“ I hear a voice, a young voice. Will you give me your hand, my kind friend, and lead me in ? ”

I held out my hand, and the horrible, soft-spoken, eyeless creature gripped it in a moment like a vice. I was so much startled that I struggled to withdraw, but

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the blind man pulled me close up to him with a single action of his arm.

“Now, boy, take me to the captain. Come now, march.” And I never heard a voice so cruel, and cold and ugly as that blind man’s.

If he had just said that a blind man was coming up the road, we shouldn’t have taken much notice, but the green shade, the tattered cloak and the tapping of the dreadful stick, combined with the sudden frightening change in his voice, makes us see him at once, and remember him ever afterwards.

I do not seem to have laid anything like the stress I meant to on the importance of dialogue. Your characters have to reveal themselves not only by their actions, but through their speech, and each speech must be as much a part of the person speaking as his face or his handwriting.

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Here are some good examples of the story-writer's art :—

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Jane Austen

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering the neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she, "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

"*You* want to tell me and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know. Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."

"What is his name?"

"Bingley."

"Is he married or single?"

"Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a-year. What a fine thing for our girls!"

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“How so? How can it affect them?”

“My dear Mr. Bennet,” replied his wife, “how can you be so tiresome? You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.”

“Is that his design in settling here?”

“Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.”

“I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party.”

“My dear, you flatter me. I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty.”

“In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of.”

“But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood.”

“It is more than I engage for, I assure you.”

“But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know, they visit no newcomers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for *us* to visit him if you do not.”

“You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls: though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.”

“I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving *her* the preference.”

“They have none of them so much to recommend

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them," replied he ; " they are all silly and ignorant, like other girls ; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters."

" Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way ? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

" You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."

" Ah ! you do not know what I suffer."

" But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a-year come into the neighbourhood."

" It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them."

" Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all."

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married ; its solace was visiting and news.

N O R T H A N G E R A B B E Y

Jane Austen

" I see what you think of me," said he, gravely ; " I shall make but a poor figure in your journal to-morrow."

" My journal ? "

" Yes ; I know exactly what you will say. Friday, went to the Lower Rooms ; wore my sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings, plain black shoes ; appeared to much advantage, but was strangely harassed by a

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queer half-witted man, who would make me dance with him, and distressed me by his nonsense."

"Indeed, I shall say no such thing."

"Shall I tell you what you ought to say?"

"If you please."

"I danced with a very agreeable young man, introduced by Mr. King; had a great deal of conversation with him; seems a most extraordinary genius; hope I may know more of him. *That*, madam, is what I *wish* you to say."

"But perhaps I keep no journal."

"Perhaps you are not sitting in this room, and I am not sitting by you. These are points in which a doubt is equally possible. Not keep a journal! How are your absent cousins to understand the tenour of your life in Bath without one? How are the civilities and compliments of every day to be related as they ought to be unless noted down every evening in a journal? How are your various dresses to be remembered, and particular state of your complexion, and curl of your hair to be described, in all their diversities, without having constant recourse to a journal? My dear madam, I am not so ignorant of young ladies' ways as you wish to believe me. It is this delightful habit of journalizing which largely contributes to form the easy style of writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated. Everybody allows that the talent of writing agreeable letters is peculiarly female. Nature may have done something, but I am sure it must be essentially assisted by the practice of keeping a journal."

VANITY FAIR

William M. Thackeray

'She's too ill to see you, sir,' Rebecca said, tripping down to Sir Pitt, who was preparing to ascend.

'So much the better,' Sir Pitt answered, 'I want to see *you*, Miss Becky. Come along a me into the parlour,' and they entered that apartment together.

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‘I wawnt you back at Queen’s Crawley, Miss,’ the Baronet said, fixing his eyes upon her, and taking off his black gloves and his hat with its great crape hat-band. His eyes had such a strange look, and fixed upon her so steadfastly, that Rebecca Sharp began almost to tremble.

‘I hope to come soon,’ she said in a low voice, ‘as soon as Miss Crawley is better—and return to—to the dear children.’

‘You’ve said so these three months, Becky,’ replied Sir Pitt, ‘and still you go hanging on to my sister, who’ll fling you off like an old shoe when she’s wore you out. I tell you I *want* you. I’m going back to the Vuneral. Will you come back? Yes or no?’

‘I daren’t—I don’t think—it would be right—to be alone—with you, sir,’ Becky said, seemingly in great agitation.

‘I say agin, I want you,’ Sir Pitt said, thumping the table. ‘I can’t git on without you. I didn’t see what it was till you went away. The house all goes wrong. It’s not the same place. All my accounts has got muddled agin. You *must* come back. Do come back. Dear Becky, do come.’

‘Come—as what, sir?’ Rebecca gasped out.

‘Come as Lady Crawley, if you like,’ the Baronet said, grasping his crape hat. ‘There! will that zatusfy you? Come back and be my wife. You’re vit vor’t. Birth be hanged. You’re as good a lady as ever I see. You’ve got more brains in your little finger than any baronet’s wife in the county. Will you come? Yes or no?’

‘Oh, Sir Pitt!’ Rebecca said, very much moved.

‘Say yes, Becky,’ Sir Pitt continued. ‘I’m an old man, but a good’n. I’m good for twenty years. I’ll make you happy, zee if I don’t. You shall do what you like; spend what you like; and ’av it all your own way. I’ll make you a zettlement. I’ll do everything reg’lar. Look year!’ and the old man fell down on his knees and leered at her like a satyr.

Rebecca started back a picture of consternation. In

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the course of this history we have never seen her lose her presence of mind ; but she did now, and wept some of the most genuine tears that ever fell from her eyes.

‘ Oh, Sir Pitt ! ’ she said. ‘ Oh, sir—I—I’m *married already*. ’

MRS. GAMP IN THE HOME OF MOULD THE UNDERTAKER

Charles Dickens

“ And likewise what a pleasure,” said Mrs. Gamp, turning with a tearful smile towards the daughters, “ to see them two young ladies as I know’d afore a tooth in their pretty heads was cut, and have many a day seen—ah, the sweet creeturs !—playing at berryins down in the shop, and follerin’ the order-book to its long home in the iron safe ! But that’s all past and over, Mr. Mould ”—as she thus got in a carefully regulated routine to that gentleman, she shook her head waggishly—“ that’s all past and over now, sir, an’t it ? ”

“ Changes, Mrs. Gamp, changes ! ” returned the undertaker.

“ More changes, too, to come, afore we’re done with changes, sir,” said Mrs. Gamp, nodding yet more waggishly than before. “ Young ladies with such faces thinks of something else besides berryins, don’t they, sir ? ”

“ I am sure I don’t know, Mrs. Gamp,” said Mould, with a chuckle.—“ Not bad in Mrs. Gamp, my dear ? ”

“ Oh, yes, you do know, sir ! ” said Mrs. Gamp, “ and so does Mrs. Mould, your ’ansome pardner too, sir ; and so do I, although the blessing of a daughter was deniged me ; which, if we had had one, Gamp would certainly have drunk its little shoes right off its feet, as with our precious boy he did, and arterwards send the child a errand to sell his wooden leg for any money it would fetch as matches in the rough, and bring it home in liquor—which was truly done beyond his years, for

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ev'ry individle penny that child lost at toss or buy for kidney ones ; and come home arterwards quite bold, to break the news, and offering to drown himself if that would be a satisfaction to his parents. Oh, yes, you do know, sir," said Mrs. Gamp, wiping her eye with her shawl, and resuming the thread of her discourse. "There's something besides births and berryins in the newspapers, an't there, Mr. Mould?"

Mr. Mould winked at Mrs. Mould, whom he had by this time taken on his knee, and said, "No doubt. A good deal more, Mrs. Gamp.—Upon my life, Mrs. Gamp is very far from bad, my dear!"

"There's marryings, an't there, sir?" said Mrs. Gamp, while both the daughters blushed and tittered. "Bless their precious hearts, and well they knows it! Well you know'd it too, and well did Mrs. Mould, when you was at their time of life! But my opinion is, you're all of one age now. For as to you and Mrs. Mould, sir, ever having grandchildren——"

"Oh! Fie, fie! Nonsense, Mrs. Gamp," replied the undertaker. "Devilish smart, though. Ca-pi-tal!" This was in a whisper. "My dear"—aloud again—"Mrs. Gamp can drink a glass of rum, I dare say.—Sit down, Mrs. Gamp, sit down."

Mrs. Gamp took the chair that was nearest the door, and casting up her eyes towards the ceiling, feigned to be wholly insensible to the fact of a glass of rum being in preparation, until it was placed in her hand by one of the young ladies, when she exhibited the greatest surprise.

JOSEPH ANDREWS

Henry Fielding

Parson Adams came to the house of Parson Trulliber, whom he found stripped in to his waistcoat, with an apron on, and a pail in his hand, just come from serving his hogs. . . . Mr. Trulliber, being informed that somebody wanted to speak with him, immediately slipped off his apron, and clothed himself in an old night-gown

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being the dress in which he always saw his company at home. His wife, who informed him of Mr. Adams's arrival, had made a small mistake ; for she had told her husband, ' She believed here was a man come for some of his hogs.' This supposition made Mr. Trulliber hasten with the utmost expedition to attend his guest. He no sooner saw Adams, than, not in the least doubting the cause of his errand to be what his wife had imagined, he told him ' He was come in very good time ; that he expected a dealer that very afternoon ' ; and added, ' they were all pure and fat, and upwards of twenty score apiece. . . . '

They were no sooner arrived (at the sty) than he cried out, ' Do but handle them : step in, friend, art welcome to handle them, whether dost buy or no.' At which words, opening the gate, he pushed Adams into the pig-stye, insisting on it that he should handle them before he would talk one word with him.

Adams, whose natural complaisance was beyond any artificial, was obliged to comply before he was suffered to explain himself ; and laying hold of one of their tails, the unruly beast gave such a sudden spring, that he threw poor Adams all along in the mire.

. . . Adams, who thought he had carried his complaisance far enough, was no sooner on his legs, than he escaped out of the reach of the animals, and cried out, '*Nihil habeo cum porcis* : I am a clergyman, sir, and am not come to buy hogs. . . . '

Mrs. Trulliber would have brought him a basin of water to wash his face, but her husband bid her be quiet like a fool as she was, or she would commit more blunders ; and then directed Adams to the pump. While Adams was thus employed, Trulliber, conceiving no great respect for the appearance of his guest, fastened the parlour-door, and now conducted him into the kitchen ; telling him he believed a cup of drink would do him no harm, and whispered his wife to draw a little of the worst ale. After a short silence, Adams said, ' I fancy, sir, you already perceive me to be a clergy-

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man.'—'Ay, ay,' cries Trulliber, grinning, 'I perceive you have some cassock : I will not venture to *caale* it a whole one.' Adams answered, it was, indeed, none of the best ; but he had the misfortune to tear it about ten years ago in passing over a stile.

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD

Oliver Goldsmith

When Sunday came, it was indeed a day of finery, which all my sumptuary edicts could not restrain. How well soever I fancied my lectures against pride had conquered the vanity of my daughters, yet I still found them secretly attached to all their former finery : they, still loved laces, ribands, bugles, and catgut ; my wife herself retained a passion for her crimson paduasoy, because I formerly happened to say it became her.

The first Sunday, in particular, their behaviour served to mortify me. I had desired my girls the preceding night to be dressed early the next day ; for I always loved to be at church a good while before the rest of the congregation. They punctually obeyed my directions ; but when we were to assemble in the morning at breakfast, down came my wife and daughters, dressed out in all their former splendour ; their hair plastered up with pomatum, their faces patched to taste, their trains bundled up into a heap behind, and rustling at every motion. I could not help smiling at their vanity ; particularly that of my wife, from whom I expected more discretion. In this exigence, therefore, my only resource was to order my son with an important air, to call our coach. The girls were amazed at the command, but I repeated it with more solemnity than before. 'Surely, my dear, you jest,' cried my wife ; 'we can walk it perfectly well : we want no coach to carry us now.'—'You mistake, child,' returned I, 'we do want a coach ; for if we walk to church in this trim, the very children in the parish will hoot after us.'—'Indeed,'

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replied my wife, 'I always imagined that my Charles was fond of seeing his children neat and handsome about him.'—'You may be as neat as you please,' interrupted I, 'and I shall love you the better for it; but all this is not neatness, but frippery. These rufflings, and pinkings, and patchings will only make us hated by all the wives of our neighbours. No, my children,' continued I, more gravely, 'those gowns may be altered into something of a plainer cut; for finery is very unbecoming in us, who want the means of decency. I do not know whether such flouncing and shredding is becoming even in the rich, if we consider, upon a moderate calculation, that the nakedness of the indigent world may be clothed from the trimmings of the vain.'

This remonstrance had the proper effect: they went with great composure, that very instant, to change their dress; and the next day I had the satisfaction of finding my daughters, at their own request, employed in cutting up their trains into Sunday waistcoats for Dick and Bill, the two little ones; and, what was still more satisfactory, the gowns seemed improved by this curtailng.

THE WHITE WHALE

Herman Melville

As they neared him, the ocean grew still more smooth; seemed drawing a carpet over its waves; seemed a noon-meadow, so serenely it spread. At length the breathless hunter came so nigh his seemingly unsuspecting prey, that his entire dazzling hump was distinctly visible, sliding along the sea as if an isolated thing, and continually set in a revolving ring of finest, fleecy, greenish foam. He saw the vast, involved wrinkles of the slightly projecting head beyond. Before it, far out on the soft Turkish-rugged waters, went the glistening white shadow from his broad, milky forehead, a musical rippling playfully accompanying the shade; and behind, the blue waters interchangeably flowed over

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the moving valley of his steady wake ; and on either hand bright bubbles arose and danced by his side. But these were broken again by the light toes of hundreds of gay fowl softly feathering the sea, alternate with their fitful flight ; and like to some flagstaff rising from the painted hull of an argosy, the tall but shattered pole of a recent lance projected from the white whale's back ; and at intervals one of the cloud of soft-toed fowls hovering, and to and fro skimming like a canopy over the fish, silently perched and rocked on this pole, the long tail feathers streaming like pennons.

T A R K A T H E O T T E R

Henry Williamson

He swam under a bridge of the small-gauge railway, whose shadow darkened the water. As he thrust up his head to vent, Tarka saw beyond the shadow-bar the white blur of water sliding over the sill of a weir. Under water again, he looked from side to side more quickly, for in this dark place the fish might easily slip by him, although the water was not two feet deep.

When midway through the shadow, his rudder swished up sickle-shaped, slanting his body. His hind legs touched stones ; he sprang. The scales of the two fish coming straight towards him in the darkness reflected only the darkness, but he had seen a hair of faintest light where the ream of a back-fin had cut the surface and glimmered with the moon-frosted slide. His teeth tore the tail of the leading fish, which escaped—his rudder lashed for another turn, his body screwed through the water, and struck upwards with teeth into the mullet's gorge. Tarka swam into moonlight and dragged the five-pound fish (despite its beats and flaps) on to a shillet heap under the spillway of the slide. He gripped it with his paws and stood over it and started to eat it, while its gills opened and closed, and it tried feebly to flap.

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CHAPTER VII

P O E T R Y

Singing as We Go

POETRY is like flying. Everybody seems a little afraid of it at first, as if it were a thoroughly dangerous pastime. But once having started, the more you do of it the more you enjoy it. Poetry, like flying, takes you off the ground and up into the clouds.

It is not easy to say exactly what poetry is. The Oxford Dictionary calls it "an elevated expression of elevated thought or feeling in metrical form."

It is sometimes the spontaneous outpouring of powerful emotions. It is also the most severely disciplined arrangement of words in the most musical order, and to be properly appreciated must be read aloud. It is not a thing of the head, but of the heart.

It is undoubtedly intoxicating.

Mr. A. E. Housman says :—

If I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion ; whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir, or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster.

Poetry is therefore something inside us which will come out if we don't bottle it up or kill it.

Poetry

Flecker was right when he said in "Hassan" :—

. . . Ah, if there should ever arise a nation whose people have forgotten poetry or whose poets have forgotten the people, though they send their ships round Taprobane and their armies across the hills of Hindustan, though their city be greater than Babylon of old, though they mine a league into earth or mount to the stars on wings,—what of them?

Hassan. They will be a dark patch upon the world.

When you are thoroughly excited about anything, you are really living poetry. When you listen to a lark singing, or watch a swallow darting over the surface of a still lake, or see a horse galloping over the downs, and feel a strange sensation down your spine, then you are feeling poetry.

The result of living or feeling poetry is to make one want to dance and sing, only most of us are too much afraid of what other people will say to do these things in public. I know when I am on a hill-top with all the loveliness of the earth surrounding me, I have great difficulty in remaining still.

This is poetry :—

Four ducks on a pond,
A grass-bank beyond,
A blue sky of spring,
White clouds on the wing :
What a little thing
To remember for years,
To remember with tears.

Now if the writer had said : " It is remarkable how vividly I remember a certain pond which has four ducks on it and a bank behind it on a certain spring day when the sky was partially clouded ; and it is remarkable what emotion this memory calls up

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even after a lapse of years." That would not be poetry. Why not?

Because poetry depends not on *what* is said, but the *way* it is said. You know what you are going to write about, and you have a vocabulary at your disposal, but you have got to do more than construct properly proportioned and harmonious sounding sentences. You have got to select exactly the right words to convey your meaning, and string them together into sentences that will exactly fit into the framework of the poem.

Nearly every poem has some sort of framework, even though it may not be apparent at first sight. There are a number of what one might call standard frameworks, for example, the sonnet, the triolet, and so on; and these are the result of a long series of experiments started when man first began to sing his thoughts aloud. Nowadays poets are more and more rejecting these well-tried forms, and are experimenting themselves and producing new frameworks to suit their own purposes.

Dissect a few of the works of great poets to see exactly what the frameworks are that they are using. A very simple type of framework is a poem made up of "rhymed couplets," *i.e.*, line 1 rhymes with line 2, line 3 with line 4, line 5 with line 6, and so on. Here are a few lines from Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" :—

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose ;
There, as I pass'd with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came soften'd from below ;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that low'd to meet their young. . . .

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Examine the lines carefully. They have ten syllables each, and there is a similar kind of lilt running through them all. Lines 2, 4, 5, 6 go "ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum." Now "The Deserted Village" is a long poem, and if Goldsmith had kept rigidly and mechanically to this rhythm all the time, the effect would be dull. And so he varies it very slightly now and again. Lines 1 and 3 go "tum-ti-ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum." You see how that variation gives life and emphasis at the same time.

Every word in that extract is in exactly its right place in the line. Alter the sequence of words and the result is merely to weaken the whole, or else to produce an effect that is merely ugly.

Read the lines again, but read "the sound was sweet" and "the village murmur up yonder hill rose" instead of what is there.

In addition to finding the right words and fitting them together in the right order, you have got to choose the right lilt or metre. The succession of long and short syllables about which I have been talking is just the thing to express the perfectly peaceful atmosphere of a sunlit countryside, but if you are describing, say, the sea, it would not be suitable.

Read the following over slowly :—

The dragon-green, the luminous, the dark, the serpent-
haunted sea,
The sun-besprinkled wine of earth, the white and blue
flower-foaming sea.

Cannot you see the wave rushing forward, the crest curling over as you get to the word "luminous,"

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and the water dashing itself on to the beach as you read the second line? That is what poetry has got to do if it is any good at all. It has got to make you see with your mind's eye things, perhaps, of which you had never even dreamed before.

Here is another lilt, this time in imitation of a barrel-organ :—

Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time,

Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)

And you shall wander hand in hand with love in Summer's wonderland :

Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London !)

The cherry trees are seas of bloom and soft perfume and sweet perfume,

The cherry trees are seas of bloom (and oh, so near to London !)

And there they say, when dawn is high and all the world's a blaze of sky,

The cuckoo tho' he's very shy, will sing a song for London.

Had it occurred to you before, that at dawn, when night has not yet left the trees and houses, the sky seems infinitely greater than at noon-day? It is the business of the poet to see more clearly and more accurately than other men, and to state what he sees more memorably.

Get hold of "The Oxford Book of English Verse" and search out the frameworks used by the great poets, ancient and modern; see how they have chosen exactly the right lilt and words to express their emotions. Read poems aloud in the manner you think they were intended to be read.

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There is nothing dull in doing all this. After all, you have got to learn how to shape your letters before you learn to write. It is no good imagining that anything you scribble down haphazardly is poetry.

Inspiration may come by a happy chance, but the expression of it demands severe discipline.

You can write poems in the dialect of your own or any other county if you like. Robert Burns wrote his songs in the Ayrshire brand of Scotland, that is to say, the ordinary language of himself and his friends. William Barnes wrote in the Dorset dialect. "The Wife a-lost" begins :—

Since I noo mwore do zee your feâce,
Up steårs or down below,
I'll zit me in the lwonesome pleâce,
Where flat-bough'd beech do grow ;
Below the beeches' bough, my love,
Where you did never come,
An' I don't look to meet ye now,
As I do look at hwome.

After you have got your subject, and your rhythm and rhyme are all settled, there remains the selection of words.

Sometimes the actual names of things are so musical that you hardly need rhymes. Mr. Massfield, the poet laureate, made one of his best poems out of a catalogue of cargoes :—

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

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Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping thro' the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes and cinnamon, and gold moidores.
Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack,
Butting thro' the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

It's the words and the arrangement of words that make poetry.

And as well as taking care to choose the right word, you have to look with special care at the consonants and vowels that make up the word. Tennyson talks of—

The moan of doves in immemorial elms
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

How does he get the sound of doves and trees and of bees humming into that? Well, the “m’s” and “s’s” have something to do with it. In poetry it isn’t just a question of taking care of your “p’s” and “q’s.” The “a, b, c’s,” and “x, y, z’s,” are just as important. You can nearly always tell when you come across real poetry. Here is an example :—

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.

Read it slowly, and not as if it were a sentence out of a nature handbook. Does the sound of it go down your spine and make you feel the top of your head coming off? When you read the words :—

Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

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you should find that “elevated” or “slightly drunk” feeling stealing over you.

The poet can be writing of anything, and if he is a good poet he can carry you away on the wings of his imagination. Keats writing of the “poetical character,” says :—

It is everything and nothing.—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade ; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical thing in existence, because he has no Identity—he is continually in, for, and filling some other body. . . .

Perhaps the easiest way to start to write poetry is to do what our earliest ancestors did, that is, sing a story. The old minstrels used to entertain the barons on their return from hunting or fighting with a sort of story told or chanted in rhyme. It is called a ballad. Here is a typical example :—

B A B Y L O N

O R , T H E B O N N I E B A N K S O ’ F O R D I E

I

There were three ladies lived in a bower—

Eh, wow, bonnie !

And they went out to pull a flower

On the bonnie banks o’ Fordie.

2

They hadna pu’ed a flower but ane,

When up started to them a banisht man.

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3

He's ta'en the first sister by her hand,
And he's turned her round and made her stand.

4

' It's whether will ye be a rank robber's wife,
Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife ? '

5

' It's I'll not be a rank robber's wife,
But I'll rather die by your wee pen-knife.'

6

He's killed this may, and he's laid her by,
For to bear the red rose company.

7

He's ta'en the second ane by the hand,
And he's turned her round and made her stand.

8

' It's whether will ye be a rank robber's wife,
Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife ? '

9

' It's I'll not be a rank robber's wife,
But I'll rather die by your wee pen-knife.'

10

He's killed this may, and he's laid her by,
For to bear the red rose company.

11

He's ta'en the youngest ane by the hand,
And he's turn'd her round and made her stand.

12

Says ' Will ye be a rank robber's wife,
Or will ye die by my wee pen-knife ? '

13

' It's I'll not be a rank robber's wife,
Nor will I die by your wee pen-knife.

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14

' For in this wood a brother I hae ;
And gin ye kill me, it's he'll kill thee.'

15

' What's thy brother's name ? come tell to me.'
' My brother's name is Baby Lon.'

16

' O sister, sister, what have I done ?
O have I done this ill to thee !

17

' O since I've done this evil deed,
Good sall shall never be my meed.'

18

He's taken out his wee pen-knife,
Eh, wow, bonnie !
And he's twyned himsel' o' his ain sweet life
On the bonnie banks o' Fordie.

I think ballads are the best way of writing poetry to begin with, because in them you are really singing a story. In other poems you are usually expressing an emotion. This emotion can be anything from grief at missing somebody or joy at the return of the swallow. The ballad need not be serious. After all, there are plenty of humorous stories that can be turned into ballads.

You can, of course, have humorous poems, too, but there is always a danger of just writing a rhyme that may be amusing, but is scarcely poetry. I think a great deal of cleverness is needed to bring off a poem of this type—something of the wit that produced :—

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How odd
Of God
To choose
The Jews.

But it is not at all a bad idea to write humorous verse as an exercise in rhyme and metre.

At any time if you find yourself getting too solemn about poetry (and if you write when in this state you are likely to be dull) it is as well to make fun of it in parody. You remember Masfield's poem, "Sea Fever," that begins :—

I must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and
the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by.

Here's a parody of that, called "April" :—

I must go back to a vest again, to a winter vest with
sleeves,
And all I ask is an honest shop where the shopmen are
not thieves.

And there's no harm in trying your hand at nonsense verses like those in "Alice in Wonderland" :—

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe :
All mimsy were the borogroves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Beware the jabberwock, my son !
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch !
Beware the jubjub bird, and shun
The framjous Bandersnatch ! "

In an earlier chapter I spoke about hate-letters. Why not try and write a hate-poem ? Here's an

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excellent one written to a fat lady seen from the train :—

Oh why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much and so much ?
O fat white woman whom nobody loves,
Why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
When the grass is soft as the breast of doves
And shivering sweet to the touch ?
Oh, why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much and so much ?

You might write an equally strong hate-poem from the fat lady to the train beginning :—

Oh, why do you snort through the fields in smoke
Hissing so much and so much ?
Oh, thin long train. . . .

Now you've got to find two rhymes to smoke that make sense and fit the line. That'll keep you busy for a bit. It's a sort of combination of jig-saw and cross-word puzzle. But it's grand practice, because it means that instead of putting down the first words that come into your head, you have to search among several words that mean more or less the same thing, in order to find one that will fit the rhyme and the beat of the rhythm.

So I should like you to practise writing as much verse as you can, not necessarily because I think you are a poet, though you may very well be, but because writing verse increases your vocabulary, makes you careful of the sound and look of words, and gives you a sense of the music that can be got out of a proper arrangement of them. Writing poetry teaches us that words are—

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Light as dreams,
Tough as oak,
Precious as gold,
As poppies and corn,
Or an old cloak.
Sweet as our birds
To the ear.

If you really enjoy reading poetry or trying to compose it, you needn't worry about yourself. It means that your eyes and mind are open to beauty and that you will always be a great lover of life. It is only if you can neither read it nor feel any desire to write it, that you'd better take care. You don't want to be blind and deaf and dumb longer than you can help.

For once you are not concerned with your brain. This time it's your imagination, which is rather like a parachute, in that you have to trust yourself to it and you may go a frightful flop. But it's exciting seeing whether it'll work when you do trust yourself to it.

But if you are wise you will pay a lot of attention to the technical side of poetry. You will try to find out why one poet uses rhyme or why another poet discards it. You will watch very carefully how poets vary their rhythm. It's extremely easy to hammer out a rhythm that is as monotonous as the pendulum of a grandfather clock. You've got to vary the swing and beat as a bird varies its flight and as the waves of the sea vary their rise and fall.

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VERSE FRAMEWORKS

When you begin writing poetry yourself do not at once reject the rigid framework type of poem as being old-fashioned. Good modern poets, such as W. H. Auden, certainly do write in an informal manner—but so do the hordes of minor-minor-poets, who seem to think they have only to string a few ill-chosen words together at random to produce masterpieces.

It really is worth while, and a valuable training, to mould, and chisel, and polish, say, a perfect sonnet or a ballade. You will feel much the same satisfaction as the jeweller who has produced a perfectly proportioned loving-cup.

Here are a few of the more common types of formal verse :—

BALLADE

(*N.B.*—Do not confuse with Ballad.)

This poem, copied from the French, has three verses, or stanzas, followed by an *envoi*. The *envoi* addresses a person, usually an imaginary Prince, and epitomises the ideas expressed in the verses.

The verses rhyme a-b-a-b-b-c-b-c, and the *envoi* b-c-b-c. No rhyme word may be repeated. The last line of all the verses and the *envoi* is the same.

Here is an example by J. B. Morton :—

BALLADE OF THE SPIRIT VOICES

The hymn is ended ; now the medium sighs,
And murmurs rather thickly through the nose ;
Though it is dark, I'm sure she rolls her eyes—
I wonder what she's going to disclose.

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A voice ! Miss Wilcox speaking ! The sound grows.
" I'm very happy here, but I forgot
To tell the gardener to mend the hose."
I never knew the dead could talk such rot.

Hullo ! Here comes a phantom hand that tries
To rouse my neighbour who is comatose.
She wakes ! She shudders ! Piercingly she cries
" It is my husband ! " Pours out all her woes,
Tells us a sympathetic current flows
From him to her. He says, " It's rather hot.
Tell Jane to wrap up warmly if it snows."
I never knew the dead could talk such rot.

A voice groans " Where is Anne ? " To our surprise,
The wall gives back a sound of heavy blows,
And then a sort of actress-squeak replies :
" Alas ! That Spring could vanish with the rose ! "
Now in a riot of ectoplasmic prose,
The medium gurgles, " Here is Captain Sprott."
The Captain says, " I was a friend of Joe's."
I never knew the dead could talk such rot.

Envoi

Prince, when we've left the sad earth's painted shows,
Some minor devil, at a random shot,
Will imitate *our* small talk, I suppose.
I never knew the dead could talk such rot.

S O N N E T

Although originally Italian, the sonnet was early adopted by English poets, and some of the most magnificent poems in the language have been in this form. The Shakespearian sonnet broke away from the Italian traditions, the rhymes being arranged in a different order : a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g. The verses are usually written without

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spaces between them, and are not necessarily complete in themselves.

A number of sonnets are often placed together to form a "Sonnet Sequence."

Here is the 111th Sonnet of Shakespeare :—

Then hate me when thou wilt ; if ever, now ;
Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss :
Ah, do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe ;
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purposed overthrow.
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come : so shall I taste
At first the very worst of fortune's might ;
And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.

Milton wrote many of his Sonnets on the original Italian plan : a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-e, c-d-e.

ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent,
E're half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, least he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd,
I fondly ask ; But patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
Bear his milde yoaik, they serve him best, his State
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o're Land and Ocean without rest :
They also serve who only stand and waite.

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TRIOLET

The triolet is also from France. It has one verse only, of eight lines with only two rhymes throughout. The lines rhyme a-b-a-a-a-b-a-b. The first line is repeated twice and the second once.

Here is a well-known triolet by Austin Dobson :—

URCEUS EXIT

I intended an Ode,
And it turn'd to a Sonnet.
It began *à la mode*,
I intended an Ode ;
But Rose cross'd the road
In her latest new bonnet ;
I intended an Ode ;
And it turn'd to a Sonnet.

This is a verse form that permits the poet to display both wit and ingenuity.

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GOOD POEMS

THE LOVE UNFEIGNED

Geoffrey Chaucer

O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,
In which that love up groweth with your age,
Repeyreth hoom from worldly vanitee,
And of your herte up-casteth the visage
To thilke god that after his image
Yow made, and thinketh al nis but a fayre
This world, that passeth sone as floures fayre.

And loveth him, the which that right for love
Upon a cros, our soules for to beye,
First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene a-bove ;
For he nil falsen no wight, dar I seye,
That wol his herte al hoolly on him leye.
And sin he best to love is, and most meke,
What nedeth feyned loves for to seke ?

MAY IN THE GREN - WOOD

15th Century. Anonymous.

In somer when the shawes be sheyne,
And leves be large and long,
Hit is full merry in feyre foreste
To here the foulys song.

To se the dere draw to the dale
And leve the hilles hee,
And shadow him in the leves grene
Under the green-wood tree.

Hit befell on Whitsontide
Early in a May mornyng,
The Sonne up faire can shyne,
And the briddis mery can syng.

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' This is a mery mornynge,' said Litulle Johne,
Be Hym that dyed on tre ;
A more mery man than I am one
Lyves not in Christiane.'

' Pluk up thi hert, my dere mayster,'
Litulle Johne can say,
' And thynk hit is a full fayre tyme
In a mornynge of May.'

SONNET VII

Shakespeare

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire ?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require.
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
When you have bid your servant once adieu ;
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
Save, where you are how happy you make those !
So true a fool is love, that in your Will,
Though you do any thing, he thinks no ill.

THE ARGUMENT OF HIS BOOK

Robert Herrick

I sing of Brooks, of Blossoms, Birds, and Bowers ;
Of April, May, of June, and July-Flowers.
I sing of May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails, Wakes,
Of Bridegrooms, Brides, and of their Bridal cakes.
I write of Youth, of Love, and have access
By these, to sing of cleanly Wantonness.

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I sing of Dews, of Rains, and piece by piece
Of Balme, of Oil, of Spice, and Amber-Greece.
I sing of Time's trans-shifting ; and I write
How Roses first came red, and Lilies white.
I write of Groves, of Twilights, and I sing
The Court of Mab, and of the Fairy-King.
I write of Hell ; I sing (and ever shall)
Of Heaven, and hope to have it after all.

T O A U T U M N

Keats

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness !
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run ;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers ;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;

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Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;
Hedge-cricket sing ; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft ;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

A F R A G M E N T F R O M T H E A N C I E N T M A R I N E R

Coleridge

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing ;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning !

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute ;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe ;
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

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THE QUESTION

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I Dream'd that, as I wander'd by the way
Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mix'd with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dare to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kiss'd it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearl'd Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets ;
Faint oxlips ; tender blue-bells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved ; and that tall flower that
wets—

Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth—
Its mother's face with heaven collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cow-bind and the moonlight-colour'd may
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day ;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray ;
And flowers azure, black, and streak'd with gold,
Fairer than any waken'd eyes behold.

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple prank't with
white,
And starry river-buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that over-hung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light ;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

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Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprison'd children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hasten'd to the spot whence I had come
That I might there present it—O ! to Whom ?

DREAM - PEDLARY

Thomas Lovell Beddoes

If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy ?
Some cost a passing bell :
Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose-leaf down.

If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
What would you buy ?
A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still,
Until I die.
Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
This would I buy.

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

George Meredith

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown eve-jay.

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Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting :
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-
spring,

Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.

Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and
ascend

Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a
sunset

Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades ;

Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey leaf ;

Yellow with stonecrop ; the moss-mounds are yellow ;

Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.

Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing
yaffle ;

Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine :

Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,

Thinking of the harvest : I look and think of mine.

THE COW

R. L. Stevenson

The friendly cow all red and white,

I love with all my heart :

She gives me cream with all her might,

To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,

And yet she cannot stray,

All in the pleasant open air,

The pleasant light of day :

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And blown by all the winds that pass
And wet with all the showers,
She walks among the meadow grass
And eats the meadow flowers.

A U T U M N

Walter de la Mare

There is wind where the rose was ;
Cold rain where sweet grass was ;
And clouds like sheep
Stream o'er the steep
Grey skies where the lark was.
Nought gold where your hair was ;
Nought warm where your hand was ;
But phantom, forlorn,
Beneath the thorn,
Your ghost where your face was.
Sad winds where your voice was ;
Tears, tears, where my heart was ;
And ever with me
Child, ever with me,
Silence where hope was.

D U C K S

F. W. Harvey

From troubles of the world
I turn to ducks,
Beautiful comical things
Sleeping or curled
Their heads beneath white wings
By water cool,
Or finding curious things
To eat in various mucks
Beneath the pool,
Tails uppermost, or waddling
Sailor-like on the shores

Poetry

Of ponds, or paddling
—Left ! right !—with fanlike fee
Which are for steady oars
When they (white galleys) float
Each bird a boat
Ripping at will the sweet
Wide waterway. . . .
When night is fallen you creep
Upstairs, but drakes and dillies
Nest with pale water-stars
Moonbeams and shadow bars,
And water-lilies :
Fearful too much to sleep
Since they've no locks
To click against the teeth
Of weasel and fox.
And warm beneath
Are eggs of cloudy green
Whence hungry rats and lean
Would stealthily suck
New life, but for the mien,
The bold ferocious mien
Of the mother-duck.

THE LITTLE GHOST WHO DIED FOR LOVE

Edith Sitwell

Deborah Churchill, born 1678, was hanged 1708 for shielding her lover after a duel in which he killed his opponent and then fled to Holland. According to the law at the time, she was hanged in his stead. It is recorded that : “ Though she died at peace with God, this malefactor could never understand the justice of her sentence, to the last moment of her life.”

Fear not, O maidens, shivering
As bunches of the dew-drenched leaves
In the calm moonlight . . . it is the cold sends quivering
My voice, a little nightingale that grieves.

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Now Time beats not, and dead Love is forgotten . . .
The spirit too is dead and dank and rotten,

And I forget the moment when I ran
Between my lover and the sworded man—
Blinded with terror lest I lose his heart.
The sworded man dropped, and I saw depart

Love and my lover and my life . . . he fled
And I was strung and hung upon the tree.
It is so cold now that my heart is dead
And drops through time . . . night is too dark to see

Him still. . . . But it is spring ; upon the fruit-boughs
of your lips,
Young maids, the dew like India's splendour drips.
Pass by among the strawberry beds, and pluck the
berries
Cooled by the silver moon ; pluck boughs of cherries
That seem the lovely lucent coral bough
(From streams of starry milk those branches grow)
That Cassiopeia feeds with her faint light,
Like Ethiopia ever jewelled bright.

Those lovely cherries do enclose
Deep in their hearts the silver snows,

And the small budding flowers upon the trees
Are filled with sweetness like the bags of bees.

Forget my fate . . . but I, a moonlight ghost,
Creep down the strawberry paths and seek the lost
World, the apothecary at the Fair.
I, Deborah, in my long cloak of brown
Like the small nightingale that dances down
The cherried boughs, creep to the doctor's bare
Booth . . . cold as ivy in the air,
And, where I stand, the brown and ragged light
Holds something still beyond, hid from my sight.

Poetry

Once, plumaged like the sea, his swanskin head
Had wintry white quills. . . . 'Hearken to the
Dead. . . .

I was a nightingale, but now I croak
Like some dark harpy hidden in night's cloak,
Upon the walls ; among the Dead, am quick.
Oh, give me medicine, for the world is sick ;
Not medicines planet-spotted like fritillaries
For country sins and old stupidities,
Nor potions you may give a country maid
When she is lovesick . . . love in earth is laid,
Grown dead and rotten ' . . . so I sank me down,
Poor Deborah in my long cloak of brown.

Though cockcrow marches crying of false dawns
Shall bury my dark voice, yet still it mourns
Among the ruins,—for it is not I
But this old world, is sick and soon must die !

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CHAPTER VIII

D R A M A

Acting a Story

THE first and essential requirement of a play is that it will act well. The playwright is telling a story just as much as a novelist or a historian, but his story has to overcome the limitations imposed by its being told within the four walls of a theatre.

If your story includes a scene in which ten battleships are blown up simultaneously in the midst of a violent storm, you would feel the limitations of the theatre if you had to present the scene on a small stage. In fact, it would be hardly worth while to begin to do so. Although cataclysms on the stage have enjoyed considerable vogue in the past, when audiences were less critical than they are now, you will be wise to leave that sort of thing alone, or else write your story in the form of a film scenario.

The first thing to do, therefore, before starting to write a play, is to decide whether your story is playable, and if it is not, to make it so.

Any number of novels have been adapted for the stage, novels that at first sight look highly unpromising. But if the adapter has used ingenuity and imagination the result can be successful.

In a play you have got to arrange that the whole of the story takes place in a limited number of

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different localities, or scenes. Also, that the whole of the telling or acting of the story shall not take longer than two-and-a-half to three hours.

First of all make a plan of the play. Decide the number of scenes and what they are to represent. It certainly does not follow that the more scenes you have the better the play becomes. The more scenes you have (if you are not writing a pantomime or a revue) the more likely you are to confuse the minds of your audience.

Having decided upon the minimum number of scenes, next draw up a list of characters. Here again you should have as few as possible. Every unnecessary character draws your audience's attention away from the really important characters.

Quite apart from this, it is as well to remember that a play with a long salary list stands rather less chance of being produced than one with a short one.

Having got your list of characters, it is helpful to write an accurate description of each of them, particularly noting any outstanding habits or peculiarity of speech. Get to know your characters. The more you know about them the more easily will you be able to make them talk and move on the stage. Your dialogue will have reality.

And the first great truth about dialogue is to keep it short. You can't have one character standing in the middle of the stage delivering a five-minute speech. Ten words is about enough for any one character at any one time. It's got to be chopped up like ordinary everyday conversation, but it's got to have more meaning in it than most conversations.

You remember "The Wind in the Willows"?

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Well, Mr. A. A. Milne turned that lovely book into a play and called it "Toad of Toad Hall," and it reads entirely differently when it's acted. All the dialogue is clipped, and everything moves much faster. Here's an example. The scene is a secret passage, and the four conspirators, Badger, Rat, Mole and Toad, are on their way to dislodge the Weasels who have taken possession in his absence of Toad's mansion. Badger and Mole are carrying lanterns. All four are armed to the teeth. They have all, of course, got to be quiet, and they all are, except Toad, who does not know the meaning of the word.

BADGER (*to RAT*) : H'sh !

RAT (*to MOLE*) : H'sh !

MOLE (*to TOAD*) : H'sh !

TOAD (*loudly*) : *What ?*

THE OTHERS : H'sh !

TOAD : Oh, all right.

BADGER : We are now in the secret passage. . . . Mole and I burst into the banqueting hall by the east door, and drive them towards the west door, where Rat and Toad—

TOAD (*impatiently*) : That's all right, Badger. Let's get at 'em.

BADGER : Rat, you're responsible for the operations on the western front. You understand ? What's the matter ?

RAT (*who is trying to read something by the light of MOLE's lantern*) : Just before we start, hadn't we better make sure we've got everything ? (*Reading.*) One belt, one sword, one cutlass, one cudgel, one pair pistols, one policeman's truncheon, one policeman's whistle—
(TOAD *blows his loudly*).

BADGER (*alarmed*) : What's that ?

MOLE (*reproachfully*) : Toad !

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TOAD (*meekly*) : I just wanted to be sure it worked.

BADGER : Now, Toad, I warn you solemnly, if I have any trouble from you, you'll be sent back, as sure as fate.

TOAD (*humbly*) : Oh, Badger !

BADGER : Well, I warn you.

RAT : One policeman's whistle, two pairs of handcuffs, bandages, sticking-plaster, flask, sandwich-case. . . . Pistols in reserve, of course. Eh, Moly ?

MOLE : Of course. Eh, Toad ?

TOAD (*who is examining his*) : Of course. (*It goes off with a tremendous bang. Everybody jumps.*)

RAT : We'll take his pistols and his whistle away. . . .

BADGER : Now then, no more talking. From this moment absolute silence.

TOAD (*very humbly*) : Just before we begin the silence, Badger—

BADGER (*after waiting in silence*) : Well—what is it ?

TOAD : A-a-a-tishoo—That's all. I felt it coming. Now I won't say another word.

You see how that keeps up the suspense. It's taut, it moves, it's exciting and it's funny. It's good playwriting. You see how strong a part imagination is playing here. You aren't really going to put a toad and a rat and a badger and a mole on the stage, and if you did they wouldn't talk English, or carry pistols or sneeze. But this is a sort of fairy play like "Alice in Wonderland," and what you say is, "if these animals could talk and behave like humans, this is how they would probably talk and behave." And it's all grand fun.

Here is another good specimen of terse dialogue, this time by Noel Coward. Notice the economy of words—two (or ten) never used when one would suffice.

Noel Coward is a master of economy not only of

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phrase, but of scene, and of characters, and of plot. He never overloads his stage with anything.

THE QUEEN WAS IN THE PARLOUR

Act 2

KRISH : Hot, isn't it ?

KERI : Extremely.

KRISH : Do you play bridge ?

KERI : Yes, brilliantly.

KRISH : Good.

KERI : Why ?

KRISH : I hope when opportunity offers you will teach Her Majesty.

KERI : I shall be charmed.

KRISH : She has no head for cards.

KERI : What a pity !

KRISH : It is very worrying.

KERI : Is she fond of the opera ?

KRISH : Passionately.

KERI : Splendid.

KRISH : With the exception of *Faust*.

KERI : Naturally.

KRISH : Do you sing at all ?

KERI : Oh yes, sometimes.

KRISH : Tenor or baritone ?

KERI : It depends on my mood.

KRISH : I understand.

Before starting writing your play proper, jot down odd scraps of dialogue and then, the following day, see if you are satisfied with it. Ask yourself whether it really sounds like human beings speaking, and if so whether they are the sort of human beings you want to portray.

Dialogue not only conveys your story to the audience, but also lets your audience know exactly

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how lovable (or the reverse) are the characters who are speaking.

This "Diminutive Drama" by Maurice Baring is both an excellent specimen of character drawing and a good piece of dialogue.

CATHERINE PARR

KING HENRY : My egg's raw. It really is too bad.

CATHERINE : Yesterday you complained of their being hard.

KING HENRY : And so they were. I don't want a hard egg, and I don't want a raw egg. I want them to be cooked just right.

CATHERINE : You are very difficult to please. The egg was in boiling water for three minutes and a half. I boiled it myself. But give it me. I like them like that. I will boil you another.

KING HENRY : No, it's too late now. But it is a fact that you have no idea how to boil an egg. I wish you'd let them do them in the kitchen.

CATHERINE : If they're done in the kitchen you complain because they're not here when you come down, and if they are here, you say they're cold.

KING HENRY : I never say anything of the kind. The cook boils eggs beautifully.

CATHERINE : She shall boil them to-morrow.

KING HENRY : One would have thought that a woman of your experience might at least know how to boil an egg. I hate a watery egg. (*Pensively.*) Poor dear Katie used to boil eggs beautifully.

CATHERINE : Do you mean Catherine Howard or Katharine of Aragon ?

KING HENRY : I was alluding to poor, dear, misguided Katie Howard. Katherine of Aragon never was my wife. The marriage was not valid.

CATHERINE : Well, Catherine Howard ought to have

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known how to boil eggs, considering her mother was a kitchenmaid.

KING HENRY : That is utterly untrue. Her mother was a Rochford.

CATHERINE : You're thinking of Anne Bullen.

KING HENRY : Yes, yes, to be sure, Katie's mother was a Somerset.

CATHERINE : You're thinking of Jane Seymour.

KING HENRY : Not at all. Jane Seymour was a sister of Somerset's.

CATHERINE : All I know is that Catherine Howard's mother was a kitchenmaid. And I think it's very unkind of you to mention her to me. I suppose you mean that you wish she were alive, and that you loved her better than you love me.

KING HENRY : I never said anything of the kind. All I said was that she knew how to boil eggs.

Having got all these points about the story, the scenes, the characters, and the dialogue clear, the next thing to do is to map out roughly what takes place in each scene. Perhaps somehow like this :—

ACT I. S. 1.

The Crawshaws' Drawing Room. Afternoon.

JOAN OXFORD and GABRIEL CRAWSHAW come in after a long walk. They talk of the coming marriage of Joan's sister EVA. TOM WILTON, who is engaged to EVA, enters, obviously distressed. He refuses to disclose what is the matter. A telegram arrives for TOM, who reads it and goes out without a word. Sounds of a motor car. Maid shows in police inspector.

INSPECTOR : I wish to interview Thomas Wilton.

Curtain.

This gives you a chance to get your dramatic situations in the right places. If you start writing a scene blindly, the chances are that you will give too

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much space to the unimportant, and that your situations when they do come will go off like damp squibs.

It is usually best to open a play quietly, and gradually work up to a climax. You have got to warm your audience up by degrees. Many plays open with a butler drawing curtains over a window, a maid preparing a tea table, or several people talking of nothing in particular.

This is done partly to let the audience settle down in their seats (you have to allow for the large and thoughtless number of people who arrive late at a theatre, no matter at what time the play is advertised to begin), and partly that they shall be wafted gently from the everyday world into the world of make-believe across the footlights.

It is, of course, possible to ring up the curtain as pistols are fired and dead bodies fall about the stage, but you have got to be pretty sure of yourself to bring it off successfully. I suggest for your first play, anyway, that you begin quietly and simply.

Having written your scene, how are you going to bring down the curtain? You have the choice of two methods, and you must decide which is the most appropriate for your story.

You can either bring it down at some exciting or intriguing moment to hold your audience in suspense until the curtain goes up again for the next scene ; or else you can bring it down in the midst of small talk, or when the last character has walked out.

Some dramatists have beside them when they are writing elaborate model theatres, with dolls or pieces of wood to represent the characters. This helps

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them to decide exactly where the various characters are at any one moment.

Although I do not suggest that you should go to great expense and labour in this direction, I think you would find it helpful to have a box of draughtsmen handy, and a piece of cardboard to represent the stage.

Stick pieces of stamp paper on to the draughtsmen and write on them the names of your characters. Play over the scene as you write it.

The draughtsmen in front of you will help you to visualise the stage as seen by the audience. Have another piece of card propped upright at the back of your "stage" with the major details of the scene sketched on—especially any doors or windows.

All this will help you to make your dialogue more real and convincing. It will also serve to remind you of the limitations of which I have already spoken, and prevent you from writing a play that is readable but unproducible.

A great deal of fun can be got out of deliberately writing a play that is unproducible, and only intended to be read. You can let your imagination rip. You can be as fantastic and improbable as you like.

But always keep at the back of your mind the fundamental fact that the primary duty of the playwright is to write plays that can be acted on a stage. Regard the unproducible fantasy as a kind of busman's holiday.

Tell your story, then, in a straightforward fashion ; keep your dialogue short and consistent with the character of person who is speaking it ; time your

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dramatic moments so that they shall have the maximum effect ; and above all don't send your audience to sleep.

Read a few modern plays that have had really long runs, and decide whether this was due to the brilliance of the writing or the brilliance of the acting, or both. Read a play, and then go and see it acted by a first-class company. Notice how the accomplished actor, assisted by a capable dramatist, brings a character to life. Study particularly the plays of Tchegov, Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward.

Look for any passages that seem to hang fire or drag. Decide why, and try to avoid (if you decide it is the fault of the dramatist) the mistake in your own writing.

So far I have been dealing with the "straight" play, but there is a less common type of drama, poetic drama.

Here the dialogue is not necessarily clipped, and it may be in verse or blank verse. The subject of your story should generally be on a more romantic plane, or of an epic character. You are not dealing with a world of everyday things, but with a world of the imagination. You are striving to put beauty into the dialogue apart from meaning.

Shakespeare is the greatest English writer of poetry-drama. Here is a portion of Henry V.'s speech at Agincourt before the battle :—

This day is call'd the feast of Crispian :
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.

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He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say, 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian :'
Then will he strip his sleeve, and show his scars,
And say, 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
Old men forget : yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
Familiar in his mouth as household words,
Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
This story shall the good man teach his son ;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered ;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers ;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother ; be he ne'er so vile
This day shall gentle his condition :
And gentlemen in England, now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhood cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

Here are a few lines from J. M. Synge's version of the age-old legend of Deirdre of the Sorrows. Naisi, the young chieftain, is persuading Deirdre to run away with him to Britain, although she is promised to the old King Conchubor.

ACT I

DEIRDRE's *old nurse's house on Slieve Fuadh.*

DEIRDRE (*despondently*) : His messengers are coming.

NAISI : Messengers are coming ?

DEIRDRE : To-morrow morning or the next, surely.

NAISI : Then we'll go away. It isn't I will give your like to Conchubor, not if the grave was dug to be my

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lodging when a week was by. (*He looks out.*) The stars are out, Deirdre, and let you come with me quickly, for it is the stars will be our lamps many nights and we abroad in Alban, and taking our journeys among the little islands in the sea. There has never been the like of the joy we'll have, Deirdre, you and I, having our fill of love at the evening and the morning till the sun is high.

DEIRDRE : And yet I'm in dread leaving this place, where I have lived always. Won't I be lonesome and I thinking on the little hill beyond, and the apple-trees do be budding in the spring-time by the post of the door ? (*A little shaken by what has passed.*) Won't I be in great dread to bring you to destruction, Naisi, and you so happy and young ?

NAISI : Are you thinking I'd go on living after this night, Deirdre, and you with Conchubor in Emain ? Are you thinking I'd go out after hares when I've had your lips in my sight ?

The natural poetry inborn in the Irish temperament continually bubbles to the surface even in straight plays. Here is a speech from Sean O'Casey's "Juno and the Paycock," that is more than half-way towards poetry :—

BOYLE : Them was days, Joxer, them was days. Nothin' was too hot or too heavy for me then. Sailin' from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antarctic Ocean. I seen things, I seen things, Joxer, that no mortal man should speak about that knows his Catechism. Often, an' often, when I was fixed to the wheel with a marlin-spike, an' the wins blowin' fierce an' the waves lashin' and lashin', till you'd think every minute was goin' to be your last, an' it blowed, an' blowed—blew is the right word, Joxer, but blowed is what the sailors use. . . .

You will find plenty of poetry in Irish drama, but it is much more rare in the English. Of late years

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perhaps nothing has been quite so satisfying as James Elroy Flecker's "Hassan."

The dialogue is rich and colourful and admirably suited to tell of the adventures of Hassan the confectioner, and of the love of Pervaneh and Rafi, in Old Baghdad.

Below is a fragment from Act IV., Scene 2. Rafi and Pervaneh have been offered the alternative of one night of love followed by death by hideous tortures, or of a lifetime of separation. They choose the former.

RAFI and PERVANEH in a cell in the Caliph's palace.

RAFI : They have changed our guard for the last time ; it will be sunset in an hour.

PERVANEH : Still a long hour before your hands are freed to make me a belt of love. Oh, idle sun, I am weary of thy pattern on the wall. Still a long hour !

RAFI : And still a night and a day before our doom.

PERVANEH : Why is your voice so sorrowful ? Your words do not keep step with your decision nor march like standard-bearers of your great resolve.

RAFI : What have I decided ? What have I resolved ? You came near. I saw the wings of your spirit beating the air around you. You locked the silver fetters round my neck and I forgot these manacles of iron : you perfumed me with your hair till this cell became a meadow : you turned toward me eyes in whose night the seven deep oceans flashed their drowned stars, and all your body asked without speech, "Wilt thou die for love ?"

PERVANEH : Do you repent ? Do you unsay the golden words ?

RAFI : Put but your lips on mine and seal my words against unsaying.

PERVANEH : I did wrong to make you passionate. I see that in your heart you do repent. I would not have

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you bound by a moment's madness but with all your reason and with all your soul.

RAFI : Ah, stand apart and veil your face, you who call in the name of reason ! You are all afire for martyrdom : can you hear reason calling from her snows ? Oh, you woman, Allah curse you for blinding my eyes with love !

PERVANEH : Ah, Rafi !

RAFI : Be silent—be silent ! Your voice is the voice of a garden at daybreak, when all the birds are singing at the sun. Forget your whirling dreams, your fires, your lightnings, your splendours of the soul, and answer the passionate voice that asks you—why should your lover die, and such a death ?

In poetic drama you have the opportunity of introducing songs and incidental music. But don't overdo it unless you want to write an opera, for then you will have to work in conjunction with an expert musician.

When writing a play for the films, remember that it can show you much finer scenery. It can take you up in the air, on the sea, over the desert, through the jungle, or to the busy city streets. Both time and distance are more easily covered than they are on the stage.

In a wireless play you see nothing. You have to get the whole effect through your ears, which means that you pay far more attention to the voice than you do if you are watching actors act. And it has the great advantage that millions of people can hear it at once without even getting up out of their easy chairs, while in a play the actors have to go on acting the same play for hundreds of performances.

We may see how radio plays should be written by looking into such a play as "Badger's Green" in

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some detail. In the first place it followed the stage tradition of being condensed in time into a day or so. Then there were only about half a dozen characters. It began with a little music, and then each of the main characters was introduced saying a typical sentence out of the play, just as on the films the face of each of the main characters is flashed on the screen so that you won't get confused as to who is who when the play begins. Then you were told what the scene was. On the wireless you can't yet see it, so you were told to imagine a study where a village cricket committee meeting was being held. Two of the oldest members, the President, an old doctor, and the captain, a fiery tempered retired major, were having a first-rate quarrel over whose wife shall superintend the tea for the great forthcoming match on the following Wednesday. They are, however, united again on discovering that a man called Butler is planning to build a lot of bungalows on the downs near the village.

They agree to fight him, and that is the end of Act I.

On the stage there is usually an interval between acts of fifteen minutes. On the radio the interval is usually about fifteen seconds, filled with music.

It is now the next morning, and we hear Mr. Butler promise the doctor a hospital, and the major the management of all the sports in his developed village, which makes them think differently about his scheme. Only the slow bowler, Mr. Twigg, who stammers a little and does a lot of fretwork, stands out against him.

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In Act III. we are at the morning of the great cricket match. Mr. Twigg has cut himself with a chisel and can't play, so they get Mr. Butler to take his place. In the last act, which is much the most exciting, we hear the last two wickets of Badger's Green fall. Fourteen runs are wanted to win. First the doctor's son is caught at the wicket, when only six are wanted. Then the last wicket but one falls, when two are wanted, and Mr. Butler goes in last, and scores the winning run off his bare knuckles.

Now on the films it would be easy to watch the actual match, the men running between the wickets, the fielder dropping a catch and Butler scoring off his knuckles. On the radio we can hear the ball go off the bat, the shouts and the clapping and the batsmen throwing down their bats in the pavilion, but we've got to use our imagination more. It's important to notice that in the play the author only gives us the fall of the last two wickets. In real life we should probably watch the whole match with interest, in a novel or story both innings would be described, but in a radio play you've only got time to select the dramatic climax or top note of excitement. You can't afford to have a single sentence that doesn't help on the story.

Because radio drama is quite a new thing a great deal of experimenting is going on, and the radio dramatist can try out all sorts of sound effects and fading from one scene to another.

It will probably be a long time before a really satisfactory technique is evolved, and by that time television will be so advanced that there will be yet another field waiting for the experimenter.

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In the meantime, writers of radio plays are badly needed. The sound effects at your disposal are almost unlimited, and your flights of imagination need only be limited by the capacity of your audience to appreciate them.

But whatever type of play you try your hand at, remember you are telling a story ; and that your story must have dramatic tension, and good action, either of the spirit or the body. The secret of play-writing is to keep your audience on the *qui vive* and to surprise them into appreciation by situations that are as plausible as they are unexpected.

First and last the word you have to keep in your mind is plausibility. The characters have to reveal their natures almost entirely by what they say. Your object is therefore to make your dialogue convincing and revelatory.

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CHAPTER IX

ORATORY

Telling the World

IN an age when broadcasting is one of the more honourable professions, it is more than ever necessary to acquire as early as possible the art of talking in public or to the public.

The qualities required for this are that you should have something to say, that you should want to say it, that you should say it as simply and shortly as possible, and that you should have a good carrying and pleasant-sounding voice. Microphones exaggerate both the blemishes of the bad and the merits of the good voices.

But speaking in public requires other qualities in addition. You have to learn to control your movements. In other countries strength of gesticulation often compensates for lack of ideas, but an educated English audience prefers a man who keeps his hands still to a man who waves them above his head.

In speaking you have to attract your audience's attention with the first sentence, either by laughter to make them feel at ease and friendly, or by a startling statement to shock them into attentiveness.

My greatest trouble in platform speaking is not a lack of words. With practice you will find that your vocabulary will not often be outstripped by

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your ideas. You will always find words to clothe your ideas.

My trouble is in remembering the sequence of my ideas and to resist the temptation to be drawn off into irrelevant digressions.

I always make elaborate notes of all speeches and lectures that I give, but I practically never refer to these notes for fear of losing the attention of the audience. I find it better to hold them with a few points and omit, through inability to look at my notes, some others, than to give the discourse as I intended with constant reference to notes.

In a word, success in speaking depends to a large extent on a well-trained memory.

In broadcasting this does not, of course, hold good, because you have the manuscript of your talk in your hand, and indeed you are reading from it.

The secret of success in broadcasting lies in your capacity to make the listener believe that you are not reading, but talking, and not talking to a crowd, but to him or her alone.

In fact, the ideal broadcaster and the ideal letter-writer are both occupied in holding familiar conversation with absent friends.

The moment you begin to teach, preach or to address the meeting as if it were the House of Commons, you are lost.

The actual technique of speaking is elusive, and depends a good deal on accommodating the timbre of your voice to the company you are in.

It is essential, of course, that you should be heard. The first thing, therefore, is to make sure that your articulation is clear. When I was being taught

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elocution I had to spend far more time than I liked in front of a looking-glass working my facial and throat muscles, a sort of dry gargling.

The second thing is to pitch your voice right. In a hall, select some person in the audience, preferably far back and fairly high up, and address your discourse to him or her.

In broadcasting you will be wise to try to visualise some one person to whom you are speaking, in order to make your voice conversational and friendly.

You must vary the pitch of your voice all the time. To lower the voice for the last syllable of every sentence means that a large percentage of your words will not be heard. To raise the pitch for the last syllable of every sentence as some parsons do is maddening. Indeed the worst offenders against spoken English are preachers.

If you want to know how English should not be spoken you have only to listen to nine out of ten men reading lessons in church or leading a congregation in prayer. The only worse examples of spoken English in public was that used in the early days of film-making. But Hollywood has changed.

Indeed, I propose to give you a debate that I had over the air across the Atlantic with Professor Cabell Greet on the relative merits of American English and our brand of English.

It may come as a surprise to you to discover that Americans find many things in our English that are as funny to them as our conception of much American English, which is so often based on ignorance.

Here it is :—

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AMERICAN-ENGLISH, OR ENGLISH-ENGLISH ?

MAIS : Before I came out to the United States I always regarded the American brand of English as lousy. It was with considerable surprise that I found on arrival in your country that you regarded the British brand of English as anæmic.

GREET : That's simply explained. It's because you people in Great Britain judge American speech, as you judge American habits, from the slang you hear on the movies, just as we judge your speech from the actors and lecturers you send over, who, you must allow, are, compared with us, both languid and effeminate.

MAIS : I certainly allow it. The criticism of our drawling darlings of the Noel Coward school in "As Thousands Cheer" was entirely justified. But we find them just as funny and just as irritating as you do. But actors' English, playwrights' English, Oxford English, or broadcasters' English is no more true British English than your Mae West English, Schnozzle Durante English, crooners' English, Amos 'n' Andy English, Hobo English, or hoodlum English is representative American English.

GREET : You're suggesting that in judging each other's language we are apt to think only of each other's worst extremes—our slang and your snobbish affectations ?

MAIS : I certainly am. Now that I've visited America I think that in the hands of the purest—some of your poets, for instance, or President Roosevelt—your brand at its best is scarcely distinguishable from ours at its best. But I think that your worst extreme is less forgivable than ours because it is completely unintelligible. Cockney may be hideous to the ear, but it is easily understood. Our snobbish affectations may be laughable, but you can tell what our hunting lords are driving at, in spite of their clipped "g's" and their meagre vocabulary.

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GREET : The fact that our English is unintelligible may be a good defence for it. It means that it's new. Your Cockney worst is worse than our worst because it has lost all trace of vitality. We're always coining fresh words. Surely that's better for the life of a language than working the same word to death.

MAIS : Definitely.

GREET : There you go. "Definitely." How many times a day do you say "definitely," Mais ?

MAIS : How many times a day is a bellboy told to "scram" ?

GREET : "Scram" is a far more expressive term than "'op it."

MAIS : Perhaps. But you work "scram" to death just as mercilessly as we work "'op it." Every time I hear anyone say "Nerts" I get a pain in the neck, and every time anyone says "Sez you" I want to give him a sock on the jaw.

GREET : And what do you think I feel on hearing a quacking repetition of "quaite, quaite," "Mah deah fellar," and "definitely" ? "Nerts" and "Sez you" are at any rate terse and to the point. You can't mistake their meaning, even if you don't like their sound. They may be less refined, but they're certainly more robust than your equivalents. And, talking about sound, what do you suppose I feel like when I hear a Cockney say, "'E that 'as ears to 'ear let 'im 'ear," or a *parson* say, "He that has yaws to yaw, let him yaw" ?

MAIS : Awful ! Murdering English is common on both sides of the Atlantic. I don't object to fresh coinage. The trouble is that you don't know where to stop. Fresh minting is essential to good currency, but if it is unregulated it has even less value than worn-out coins. Did you see Alexander Woolcott's collection of some of your spurious mintings ? Are you going to defend "buns-buns" for hot-dogs made of rabbit, or "helpy-selfy" stores or "Wigly-Pigly" or "dog-sleepies" ? "Ye Olde Shoppe" needs just as severe a kicksy-wicksy in the pantsy-wantsy in America as "Ye Old Antique Shop"

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in my country. You grow so keen on inventing new words that you go on inventing just for the sake of inventing.

GREET : I'm certainly not going to defend "bunbuns" or "Wigly-Pigly," but I maintain that the language adopted by some English mothers to their babies and English girls to their dogs is just as exasperatingly futile. Wouldn't you like to administer a kicksy-wicksy to quite a number of these folk? Why should people lose all sense of language when talking to small children, dogs, and their lovers?

MAIS : They do that all the world over. Have you forgotten Voine in "Racketty Rax": "Duzzem wannum baby to weavenum? Diddum 'ittle tiss fir's den"? But do you really find our London Cockney more discordant than your New York "Thoirty thoid street"?

GREET : Yes, the Cockney grates on my ears even more with his haziness about aspirates than "thoid" for "third." We regularly drop our aitches if the word is unstressed, as in 'is, 'im, but we don't put them in the wrong place. But our argument surely is not which of the two brands of English can produce the worst travesties, but, taking it by and large, which country is dealing more fairly with the common tongue? You in Britain are at one very great disadvantage. Even in that tiny island you speak about fifty-seven varieties of English. There are so many different dialects that a man of Devon speaks a tongue that the man of Durham cannot follow at all. You can tell a Lancashire man from a Somerset man as soon as he opens his mouth.

MAIS : That is so. Each county keeps its strength of individuality by preserving its county dialect distinct. We think that a good thing.

GREET : It is picturesque, but, I should think, mighty inconvenient. When you were going round the States, did you notice any such marked differences of dialect with us? Did you find it difficult to understand what people said to you?

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MAIS : I certainly did not. The average American speaks slowly, distinctly, and has a much more melodious voice than the average Englishman. I don't know where that silly idea of all Americans speaking with a nasal twang had its origin. I never heard it. And I heard no dialects, in our sense of the word. Perhaps my ear is not sensitive enough to catch slight changes in pronunciation and inflexion. It certainly was a blessed relief to travel round the entire country without hearing a single "h" dropped and to hear most words, except "Yes," given their full value. I am not accusing the United States of clipping words, but only of coining them too fast.

GREET : You might bring a similar charge against Shakespeare.

MAIS : That's true, and your phrases have the warm ring that the Elizabethans had. I certainly prefer "I'll be seeing you" as a parting sentence to "So long." It sounds more friendly. And "I'm all washed up" is far more expressive than "I'm fed up" or "I'm tired out." I certainly hand it to you when it comes to vigour of metaphor. But what's your defence for sentences like "Thanks a lot" or words like "Eats" ?

GREET : You prefer "Thanks very much" don't you ? Isn't it a matter of convention or *fashion* ? You say "I love you a lot," and "I pay you a lot"—why not "I thank you a lot" ? It's just as correct, or incorrect, grammatically, isn't it ? While as for "Eats"—you don't shudder when I suggest "Drinks," do you ?

MAIS : Only with delightful anticipation of mint julep or gin fizz. There's something in what you say about fashion. Tomayto is just wearing your hat tilted slightly over to the right, and there's no reason why you shouldn't lengthen or shorten syllables without worrying whether they're false quantities or not, just as girls shorten or lengthen their frocks. So long as the word suits you. After all, we call "Eros" "Eeross," and nothing could be falser than that. So why not "reccud," "deepo," "address," "magazine," "advertisement," and "squay-lor" ? Though I'd dearly like to know how you came

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to like them that way. Was it just a cantankerous desire to be different, or have you precedent for it?

GREET : Well, I can help you there. *Advertisement* came direct from Ireland or from the provinces. You forget there are other brands of English than yours in London. Doesn't Scotland contribute *magazine*? Your own B.B.C. doesn't always seem to be so particular about *precedence*, as you call it. How do you like being forced to say "threppence," "eyedill," "berett," and "decay-dence" in 1932 and "*decadence*" in 1933? If it wasn't for them you'd all have been reasonable and saying "docill" and "futill" years ago. And is it wise for an Englishman to talk of precedent in pronunciation? Your ancestors of 1734 would find our pronunciation of words much nearer his own than yours. It is you people who have flouted precedent and gone your own sweet way. Not we. On what grounds can you defend "*shedule*"? You might just as well say "*sheme*" for "*scheme*." Though perhaps it ought to be *sedule* on the analogy of schism. But to be quite frank, I think you're far more illogical and haphazard than we are. Why, you won't even allow the people who live in a place to know the way to pronounce it! Why is it only in Derby that the natives call it by its right name? Darby is just the snobbish affectation of the South of England. And not only is ours nearer the true English. How can you defend "*varse*" or "*vawse*" for "*vayse*"? A ridiculous bit of pedantry. You can always tell an Englishman by his "damns." Your damn certainly has not had its day, in spite of Sheridan. You seem to be a nation of one oath, one set phrase for all occasions. How many Americans did you hear swear—to so little effect? How many Americans greeted you with a stereotyped "How do you do?"

MAIS : Our oaths are no more than exclamation marks, a more robust way of saying "Oo" and "Er" and "Tut." You express surprise, anger, and dismay more spontaneously and humorously than we do because you are more easily surprised, more quickly angered or

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dismayed than we are. You are a more flamboyant nation than we are, being much younger, and you express your flamboyance in flamboyant language. When we say "How do you do?" we don't care two hoots how you do. When you say "Glad to know you" you make us feel that you are genuinely glad to know us. In fact, your speech marches with that of the Quakers in sincerity and accuracy. Your "yea" is "yea" and your "nay" is "nay," though you like to make it more emphatic with embellishments.

GREET : It sounds to us as if you preferred American English to your own.

MAIS : I do, but rather because of its future than of its past. The future of English speech lies with you. In our hands it has been a good weapon these many hundred years. Our poets have sounded its many stops and played a rich and rare music with it. They have kept it bright, pure, and unsullied. But others have hacked it mercilessly. Our lawyers have twisted it into an unintelligible jargon, our politicians have turned it into meaningless windy suspirations, our priests have emasculated it, the mob—with its lack of all reverence for tradition and dignity—has lopped and truncated it with a fine insolence, and the leisured, with equal insolence, reduce their speech to a few shibboleths. It has been left to you to infuse fresh blood into this poor, foully abused language, and give it a new lease of life. You've probably never heard an Englishman say this before, but I find myself going to the movies, not because I expect to find any æsthetic entertainment in the show, but *solely*, *solely* as a change from the minced, slipshod, colourless speech of my own countrymen. I am homesick for the rich, full-blooded accents of America ; it's in better taste, and it shows—this'll surprise you—better breeding than our language, and that is why I'd rather just sit back and listen to you than argue. That is why, night after night, I go, not to gaze on the face of Myrna Loy (though that's pretty good), but to hear her speak, and to listen to the wisecracks of William Powell.

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GREET : It's funny you should say that, because, over here, people often go to the theatre not so much for the excellence of the English play as to listen to the English actor. Perhaps the truth is that change is good for us all once in a while.

MAIS : Of course it is. But there's more in it than that. It really is a question of the full-blooded against the anæmic. You hold life much more cheaply than we do. We very rarely dare use the word "die" in my country. We talk of our friends passing over or passing away, and we talk of putting a dog to sleep. You are much better at calling a spade a spade than we are.

GREET : I'd be glad to think so. But how about our morticians, casket companies, and all that? I fear that when it comes to indulging in polite euphemisms we've nothing on you. We both say B.O. to that goose-phrase Body-odour. Isn't the truth of the whole matter that each nation has a lot to learn from the other? We enrich your vocabulary with new full-blooded idioms, and you help us by showing us the value of restraint. There ought to be a constant interchange, so that in the end we should arrive at an English that can be easily understood the world over.

MAIS : You don't want a standardised language, do you? Heaven forbid! It is the crowning glory of the English language that it's always in a state of flux.

GREET : Don't get me wrong. I mean that we should give you back *gotten*, which you have foolishly truncated and forgotten, while we take in return such admirable monosyllables as *lift*, a far better word than *elevator*. I think *cab* is a better abbreviation than *taxi*. But you should adopt *freight* train in place of that rather awkward compound *goods-train*, and *subway*, though a barbarism, is an easier word to say than *underground*. I should like to see the common words the same, for English is very important as an international language.

MAIS : This interchange of odd words might help to make us a little more tolerant and understanding with each other, but what I want to see is the *spirit* of the

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language transmitted. I want Britain to catch the enthusiasm that characterises American speech, the freshness of your repartee and your genius for inventing apt metaphor and simile. We are far too content to drag out the old stale images that have lost all their savour and only make a fresh mind shudder at their ineptitude. And so I'm not going to say "So long" instead of "Good night." I'm going to pay you the tribute of using what I sincerely hope to be true, what you all say to me and to each other on parting:—

"I'll be seeing you."

So I suggest if you wish to enrich your vocabulary, the slickness of your repartee, the vigour of your metaphor and idiom, that you go even oftener than you now do to the pictures and listen carefully to the speech of the best Americans.

It always strikes me as most odd that English girls of to-day, rightly striving to increase their attractiveness, spend so much time in dressing their hair like Katherine Hepburn, or reshaping their faces like Joan Crawford or Anna Sten, but spend no time at all in trying to mould their speech on the lines of Myrna Loy.

Ugliness of voice is far commoner in England than ugliness of feature or form, and much less forgivable.

To be well-spoken is at least as great an asset as to be neatly dressed, and is far more often taken into account as an index of attractiveness in character.

There was a time when the pen was supposed to be mightier than the sword. It is certainly true to-day that the voice is mightier than any bomb. Think of the power of the European dictators on the air, or the fame of the telephone girl now known as "the Golden Voice."

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If you wish to exert a wide influence over your fellow-man to-day, you do not write books in the faint hope that a thousand people will read them. You speak into a microphone with the more or less certain knowledge that a million or so of your fellow-men are listening.

The prestige of modern rulers and statesmen has been enormously increased by the invention of wireless. You have only to recall the immense effect of the King's broadcasts to his people during the Jubilee to realise the truth of this.

But just as the sensitive instrument exaggerates the slightest rustle of paper, and the smallest lapse into dialect or formalism, so does it most quickly and glaringly betray hollowness in argument, dullness of mind or insincerity of character.

The rule is to speak from the heart or to refrain from speaking.

The head should be used to give order to the emotions that spring from the heart clear but tumultuous as water from a spring.

But do not talk at all until you are quite sure not only what you are going to say, but also of the order in which you are going to present your points. There must be no hesitation, no "er-er," no stammering, no dreadful pauses. Practice on the dog, practice on yourself, but pay the public the compliment of giving them the perfectly prepared speech which always sounds as if it were flowing with the easy inevitability of a river.

There are people who read their speeches, but these are usually scientists of high repute unravelling a point of great intricacy.

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There is nothing in the world to prevent you from writing out your speech in full beforehand and then learning it by heart. I have never had the patience to do this, and if I did I should never remember to give it as I wrote it.

I find it far easier to think of fresh ideas than to remember old ones.

But you must learn not to be susceptible to your audience's coldness or antipathy.

If anybody moves, coughs, sneezes, blows his nose, shuffles his chair or turns his head in any audience when I am talking, I am always put off.

I hate people coming in late or going out early. I hate interruptions or the distracting noises of street-cars outside.

And that is, of course, where broadcasting scores. You are shut up in a quiet room, and the worst thing that can happen is the twinkling of white and red lights, the meanings of which I have never discovered.

On the other hand, the actual presence of an audience gives a human note.

You can more or less tell how your points are being taken. Applause is always welcome, and to me of great encouragement. So are questions.

Questions stimulate my rather sluggish brain into activity, so I always prefer question-time to the lecture itself.

One of the things that I most lament having failed to take advantage of at school and at the University was the debating society.

I should there have learnt to stand up before my

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fellows and discover how to marshal arguments and present facts in the most persuasive way.

To sway an audience to adopt one's point of view must be one of the most satisfying of all human triumphs.

With regard to the actual pronunciation of words you will see from the lists of words that follow that there is a good deal of difference of opinion about pronunciation. It is an English habit to borrow words freely from abroad and pronounce them in ways that the originators of the words would find it impossible to recognise.

The two lists printed below consist of recommendations made by the B.B.C.'s Advisory Committee on spoken English, for the benefit of announcers. Perhaps it is the fault of the microphones that they always seem to speak of "The Wahless Orkistra."

(a)

Anemoscope	Ānémmōscope
Aviso	Āvizō
Blackguard	Blággard
Bombasine }	Bombăzéén
Bombazine }	
Bower (bow anchor)	Bówer (-ow as in "now")
Brome (-grass)	Broom
Canton (geographical)	Cántón
Canton (heraldic)	Cántōn
Canton (military)	Căntóon
Capivi	Căpívy
Clinometer	Clínómmeter
Coiffure	Kwaaféwer
Colchicum	Cólchicum
	("ch" as in "church")
Condyle	Cóndil

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Cornopean	Cörnōpean
Decor (stage setting)	Déckor
Demonetize	Deemúnnetize
Diphtheria	Difthéeriă
Distract	Distráy
Drosometer	Drossómmeter
England	Ing-glănd
English	Íng-glish
Exhibit	Egzíbbít
Financier	Finnánnseer
Funicular	Fewníkewlăr
Genre	as in French
Guidon	Gídōn (" g " as in " give ")
Halyard }	Hályărd
Halliard }	
Handkerchief	Hánkerchiff
Headman	Héd-man
Hover	Hóvver
Intermezzo	Intermétsō
Malkin	Máwkin
Mankind	Mankínd (as opposed to Womankind : Mánkind)
Mischief	Míschiff
Orbital	Órbítăl
Orgy	Órjy
Parakeet	Párakeet
Parchedness	Párchědněš
Pari Mutuel	Párry mewtewéll
Parquet	Párkay
Phthisic	Thíssik
	(" th " as in " thick ")
Phthisis	Thíssiss
	(" th " as in " thick ")
Piano	Peeánnō
Piano (musical direction)	Peeáanō
Pompon	as in French
Pom-pom	Póm-pom
Promenade	Promměnáad
Pyriform	Pírriform

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Ransack	Ránsack
Recollect (remember)	Reckolléct
Recollect (collect again)	Ree-colléct
Regiment	Réjjiměnt
Risible	Rízzible
Röntgen	Rúntgen
	(“ g ” as in “ get ”)
Roster	Róster
Sachem	Sáychem
Secretary	Sécrětäry
Steelyard	Stéelyard
Stupe	Stewp
Timbale	as in French
Tirailleur	as in French
Trinitrotoluene	Trinītrōtōlleween
Trochee	Trókee
Viticulture	Vitticultŭre
Waft	Waaft

(b)

Adobe	Ādoby
Apostle	Āpóssle
Avoirdupois	Avverděpóize
Bulwark	Búll-wirk
Citation	Sytáyshon
Contribute	Contríbbute
Distribute	Distríbbute
Endemic	Endémnik
Epistle	Epíssle
Formative	Fórmäive
Heron	Hérron (“ e ” as in “ get ”)
Jugular	Júg-ewlär
Liqueur	Likkúre
Long-lived	Long-livved
Manifold	Mánniföld
Mediocre	Méediōcre
Mediocrity	Meediócrity
Molecule	Móllekule
Quaff	Kwoff

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Quagmire	Kwágmyre ("a" as in "hat")
Reveille	Revélly
Short-lived	Short-livved
Simultaneous	Simmultáyneous
Sleight	Slight
Solo (Plural of)	Solos, but Soli in musical directions
Sycophant	Síkkofant
Threepence	Thréppence "e" as in "get")

PROPER NAMES

Angora	Place Name : Ángöora
	Adjective : Angóra
Argentina	Arjentéena
Argentine	Árjentyne
Covent Garden	Kóvvent Gárden
Kenya	Kéenya

FOREIGN WORDS

A Priori	Áy-Pry-ór-eye
Sine die	Sýnee dýee

It is, however, unlikely that you will ever find yourself called upon to use more than 50 per cent. of these words. What is a drosometer, anyway? Sachem and stupe sound like a pair of cross-talk comedians.

To sum up. Have something to say ; be physically able to say it so that it shall be heard ; be careful to pronounce your words as they should be pronounced ; and, above all, keep in mind the fact that you are standing on the platform for a purpose, and that that purpose is not to send your

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audience to sleep or to their homes before the proper time.

As a tail-piece here is a pronunciation test sent in to a Sunday paper by a correspondent, who suggests that it should be read out aloud in each family circle by everyone in turn.

On a Sunday morning, a decadent and despicable coiffeur, who was a bit of a fanatic, was suffering from vertigo at a matutinal hour, and was annoyed at the surveillance and espionage of his valet, since he was in dishabille. He considered his conduct heinous and flagitious. His breakfast had consisted of his usual ration—a single scone. He went to the bathroom and turned on the geyser. The water soughed through the pipe—a conduit of small calibre—causing a curious acoustic vagary. “Pshaw,” he cried, and launched into demoniacal cachinnations. He inveigled his valet inside and nonchalantly caught him with a boxer’s cinch, talking gibberish as he did so. The pain in his abdomen suggested blood tests in a laboratory, but he went for a trip in an aerial charabanc instead. After this he went to church and admired the reredos and clerestory. He considered he had acted with both acumen and probity.

It is a striking tribute to the flexibility of our laws of pronunciation that you will get no two people in England to pronounce that short paragraph alike.

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Here are a few really first-class speeches :—

THE KING TO HIS PEOPLE

Broadcast from Buckingham Palace, May 6th, 1935

At the close of this memorable day I must speak to my people everywhere. Yet how can I express what is in my heart? As I passed this morning through cheering multitudes to and from St. Paul's Cathedral, as I thought there of all that these twenty-five years have brought to me and to my country and my Empire, how could I fail to be most deeply moved? Words cannot express my thoughts and feelings. I can only say to you, my very dear people, that the Queen and I thank you from the depth of our hearts for all the loyalty and—may I say?—the love with which this day and always you have surrounded us. I dedicate myself anew to your service for the years that may still be given to me.

I look back on the past with thankfulness to God. My people and I have come through great trials and difficulties together. They are not over. In the midst of this day's rejoicing I grieve to think of the numbers of my people who are still without work. We owe to them, and not least to those who are suffering from any form of disablement, all the sympathy and help that we can give. I hope that during this Jubilee Year all who can will do their utmost to find them work and bring them hope.

Other anxieties may be in store. But I am persuaded that with God's help they may all be overcome, if we meet them with confidence, courage, and unity. So I look forward to the future with faith and hope.

It is to the young that the future belongs. I trust that through the Fund inaugurated by my dear son the Prince of Wales to commemorate this year many of them

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throughout this country may be helped in body, mind, and character to become useful citizens.

To the children I would like to send a special message. Let me say this to each of them whom my words may reach : The King is speaking to *you*. I ask you to remember that in days to come you will be the citizens of a great Empire. As you grow up always keep this thought before you ; and when the time comes be ready and proud to give to your country the service of your work, your mind, and your heart.

I have been greatly touched by all the greetings which have come to me to-day from my Dominions and Colonies, from India, and from this Home Country. My heart goes out to all who may be listening to me now wherever you may be—here at home in town or village, or in some far-off corner of the Empire, or it may be on the high seas.

Let me end my words to you with those which Queen Victoria used after her Diamond Jubilee, thirty-eight years ago. No words could more truly or simply express my own deep feeling now : “ From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them.”

Here is the speech that His Majesty made in reply to the Addresses of Members of the Lords and Commons and Prime Ministers of the Dominions :—

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons :

I thank you from my heart for your loyal Addresses, and for the words of devoted affection which you have used in speaking of myself, of the Queen and of our Family.

Your presence here to-day, accompanied by the Prime Ministers of the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa, gives rise to many memories and many thoughts. The Mother of Parliaments and her children, grown to full estate, stand now upon equal terms in common allegiance to the Crown. The unity

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of the British Empire is no longer expressed by the supremacy of the time-honoured Parliament that sits here at Westminster. The Crown is the historic symbol that unites this great family of nations and races, scattered over every quarter of the earth. The United Kingdom and the Dominions, India, the numerous Colonies and Dependencies, embrace such wide varieties of speech, culture and form of government as have never before in the world's history been brought into a Commonwealth of Peace. In these days, when fear and preparation for war are again astir in the world, let us be thankful that quiet government and peace prevail over so large a part of the earth's surface, and that under our flag of freedom so many millions eat their daily bread in far distant lands and climates, with none to make them afraid.

I especially welcome here to-day representatives of my Indian Empire.

This, my Palace of Westminster, in the mighty heart of our Empire, is the very cradle of our envied Parliamentary institutions. Here is the anvil whereon our common law was forged, to become the joint inheritance of the United States of America and our own community of peoples. Beneath these rafters of medieval oak, the silent witnesses of historic tragedies and pageants, we celebrate the present under the spell of the past.

It is to me a source of pride and thankfulness that the perfect harmony of our Parliamentary system with our Constitutional Monarchy has survived the shocks that have in recent years destroyed other Empires and other liberties. Our ancient Constitution, ever adaptable to change, has during my reign faced and conquered perils of warfare never conceived in earlier days, and has met and satisfied new democratic demands both at home and overseas. The system bequeathed to us by our ancestors, again modified for the needs of a new age, has been found once more, as of old, the best way to secure government by the people, freedom for the individual, the ordered strength of the State, and the rule of law over governors and governed alike.

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The complex forms and balanced spirit of our Constitution were not the discovery of a single era, still less of a single party or of a single person. They are the slow accretion of centuries, the outcome of patience, tradition, and experience, constantly finding channels old and new for the impulse towards liberty, justice and social improvement inherent in our people down the ages.

When my Grandmother, Queen Victoria, of illustrious memory, rejoiced with her people on the occasion of her two Jubilees, she gave thanks for a long period of unbroken prosperity. Such periods cannot always recur. In looking back over the 25 years of my reign, the thankfulness that I feel to-day is chiefly for escape from danger greater than ever before threatened our land. I can never forget how the peril from without at once united all the parties, classes, Governments, and races of the Empire ; men and women played their parts ; the ranks were closed and, in the issue, strength upheld the free. Let us not in this hour of thanksgiving fail to remember those who gave their lives, or who live now maimed or blinded, that we might continue to enjoy the blessings of life.

Through later years our path has led uphill. In the aftermath of war, in a world exhausted by its ordeals and impoverished by its destruction, we set ourselves to resume our normal ways, to recreate the structure of our industry and commerce, and to respond to the urgent desire to improve the conditions of life. We were treading unfamiliar and broken ground, for there had been far-reaching changes, especially in economic conditions. Everywhere a feeling of uncertainty and lack of confidence hung like a shadow over human endeavour. But we have made headway by the earnest goodwill, prudence, and stability of my people, and to-day the country has attained to a measure of industrial success which gives it confidence in the future.

I am very conscious that these years have brought hardship and often disappointment, and I have been moved with profound admiration for the great-hearted-

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ness of my people, and for the steadfast fortitude and unbending will to overcome, which they have ever shown in their anxieties. I sympathise deeply with those who have endured the sadness and burden of unemployment. It is a source of comfort to me to feel that from these times of trial there has grown up throughout our community a stronger feeling of fellowship one with another.

I have been blessed in all my work in having beside me my dear Wife, of whom you have spoken so kindly. I give thanks to Almighty God, Who has thus far sustained me and my people, and I pray that we may continue to pursue the cause of freedom and progress in a spirit of peace, tolerance, and understanding.

One of the most famous historical speeches is that of Abraham Lincoln, delivered at Gettysburg on November 19th, 1863 :—

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men were created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great Civil War, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that

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from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

And lastly, here is a fragment from his speech in his own defence against a charge of treason by Sir Roger Casement :—

. . . Ireland that has wronged no man, that has injured no land, that has sought no dominion over others—Ireland is treated to-day among the nations of the world as if she was a convicted criminal. If it be treason to fight against such an unnatural fate as this, then I am proud to be a rebel, and shall cling to my “rebellion” with the last drop of my blood. If there be no right of rebellion against a state of things that no savage tribe would endure without resistance, then I am sure it is better for men to fight and die without right than to live in such a state of right as this. Where all your rights become only an accumulated wrong ; where men must beg with bated breath for leave to subsist in their own land, to think their own thoughts, to sing their own songs, to garner the fruits of their own labours—and even while they beg, to see things inexorably withdrawn from them—then surely it is braver, a saner and a truer thing, to be a rebel in act and deed against such circumstances as these than tamely to accept it as the natural lot of men.

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CHAPTER X

DIALECT AND JARGON

Other People's Speech

SOONER or later, in the writing of almost any sort of English, you will be faced with the problem of making your characters (if you are writing a novel, for example), speak a brand of English different from that to which you yourself are accustomed.

If you have a Welshman, a Scot, and an Irishman in your book, you must make them speak in their proper idiom.

Naturally you would have to be very clever indeed if, being an Englishman, you wrote a full-length novel in the Ayrshire dialect, never having even seen Scotland.

The best thing to do in order to get a certain facility in writing simple dialect is to live amongst the people of whom you are writing, and to absorb the main characteristics of their speech.

Failing this, and few of us are able to live in a particular district to order solely for the purpose of gathering dialect, the best plan is to *read* dialect, and absorb a little that way.

There are, in point of fact, plenty of books written in almost every county dialect of the British Isles. And there are quite a number of text-books, too, by people who have studied the subject.

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People are (or should be) proud of their native speech. You will discover this if you try and convince a Yorkshireman that "booter" ought to be pronounced "butter."

If you are in need of a few phrases from Scotland, read Burns' songs, and the writings of Neil Bell.

Here is a fragment from Burns' "Tam o' Shanter" :—

When chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate ;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
And getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scotch miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gath'ring her brows like gath'ring storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

If you need a breath of Irish-English, try the plays of Sean O'Casey, and J. M. Synge. Here are a few lines from the former's "Juno and the Paycock" :—

If he's runnin' afther Mary, aself, he's not goin' to be runnin' afther me. Captain Boyle's able to take care of himself. Afther all, I'm not gettin' brought up on Virol. I never heard him usin' a curse ; I don't believe he was ever dhrunk in his life—sure he's not like a Christian at all !

You won't have much trouble to find specimens of the speech of Yorkshire.

Listen to Jess Oakroyd in Mr. Priestley's "Good Companions" :—

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"Well," said Jim, falling into step, "what did you think on 'em?"

"Think on 'em!" Mr. Oakroyd made a number of noises with his tongue to show what he thought of them.

"Ah thowt t'United'd 'a' made rings rahnd 'em," Jim remarked.

"So they owt to 'a' done," said Mr. Oakroyd, with great bitterness. "And so they would 'a' done if they'd nobbut tried a bit. I've seen 'em better ner this when they've lost. They were better ner this when they lost to Newcastle t'other week, better bi far."

"Ay, a seet better," said the other. "Did you ivver see sich a match! Ah'd as soon go and see t'schooil lads at it. A shilling fair thrawn away, ah call it." And for a moment he brooded over his lost shilling. Then, suddenly changing his tone and becoming very aggressive, he went on: "Yon new centre-forrard they've gotten—MacDermott, or whativver he calls hissen—he'll nivver be owt, nivver. He were like a great lass on t'job. And what did they pay for him? Wer it two thahsand pahnd?"

"Ay." Mr. Oakroyd made this monosyllable very expressive.

You will find good Devon dialect in the novels of Eden Phillpotts, good Sussex in the novels of Sheila Kaye-Smith, good Derbyshire in "Means Test Man," excellent Tyneside in Dr. Cronin's "The Stars Look Down," and good Lancashire in "Love on the Dole."

In addition to her dialects, the English language as we know it is made up of a thousand other minor languages. There is the language of the Church, of Sport, of the Press, and of Science. All these contribute in a greater or a lesser degree to the speech and writings of the educated man or woman.

The language of the Church is easily the best, and

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has had a profound influence in moulding the common speech.

Here is a magnificent passage from Ecclesiasticus.

Let us now praise famous men, and our Fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them, through his great powers from the beginning. Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies : Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions. Such as found out musical tunes, and recited verses in writing. Rich men furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations. All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times. There be of them, that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported. And some there be, which have no memorial, who are perished as though they had never been, and are become as though they had never been born, and their children after them. But these were merciful men, whose righteousness hath not been forgotten. With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance, and their children are within the covenant. Their seed stands fast, and their children for their sakes. Their seed shall remain for ever, and their glory shall not be blotted out. Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore.

Now read aloud the following from the Prayer Book :—

A GENERAL THANKSGIVING

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life ; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by

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our Lord Jesus Christ ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives ; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days ; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end.

Amen.

The splendour of the prose in our Bible and Prayer Book is one of the most precious gems in English literature. But unfortunately few clergy have the capacity to convey to their listeners either its drama or its rich rhythmic qualities.

The leading articles in such papers as *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* are usually written by men who are masters of English. A leader should be dignified without being pompous. There should not be a word too much or a word too little, and there should be no doubt whatever as to what is being said, for it is the voice of the paper crystallised into ink.

When you read the following specimen from *The Times* you may notice that there is a certain relation between this type of English and oratory. "King and Parliament" has all the elements of a great speech :—

KING AND PARLIAMENT

The Times

Friday, May 10th, 1935

Another page of history was written yesterday within the walls where so much of our history has been made.

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Over 800 years ago the KING of ENGLAND celebrated the feast of Whitsuntide in Westminster Hall. Here, over 500 years ago, was read out to Parliament the document by which RICHARD II., who had roofed the Hall with the splendour of oaken timbers of unrivalled span, resigned his "tired majesty to Henry Bolingbroke." Here, nearly 300 years ago, CHARLES I. stood his trial with a disdainful courage which a few years earlier might have saved STRAFFORD and so saved his crown; and here CROMWELL was saluted as Lord Protector beneath the very roof upon which a few years later raging hands impaled his mouldering skull. Through this Hall twenty-five years ago a line of mourning people passed ceaselessly and sorrowfully for three full days to pay their last homage to EDWARD the PEACE-MAKER. And here yesterday came GEORGE V., *Dei gratia Britanniarum et terrarum transmarinarum quae in ditione sunt Britannici Regis, Rex, fidei defensor, Indiae imperator*, to receive the thanks, congratulations, and homage of Parliament for twenty-five years' faithful stewardship of a great trust.

Surrounded by a company of such memories—some good, some bad, but all great—the minds of all who witnessed yesterday's addition to the scroll of Westminster Hall must have been stirred by emotions very different from, though just as deep as, those aroused by the tumult of gay and applauding crowds. There was a reminder of old discords. There was a proof of their appeasement in the presence of a British KING, acknowledged with deep affection in every part of his dominions. There was an inspiring sense of the continuity of great buildings and of great institutions; and there was a record, in the Parliamentary War Memorial, which flanked the entrance leading to St. Stephen's Hall, of the trials through which the steadfastness of KING and people have carried both during this generation. KING, Parliament, and people were standing on what is ground historic to all of them, and the Press too had a right to be where four centuries ago their professional ancestors established stalls for the sale of books. The occasion was

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indeed worthy of the setting, and the persons worthy of the occasion. Throughout the whole of his public utterances during these Jubilee celebrations the KING has touched unerringly a note which must endear him to every section of his people. When, in his broadcast address, he turned to the children among his listeners and said, "the KING is speaking to you," the human feeling of his thought and of his words inspired far more than childish hearts. When he told foreign diplomats that he rejoiced that London was a "coveted post," he showed exactly the modest pride in the genius and in the influence of his own people which they would have had him show. When he told the representatives of the Empire that he "welcomed one and all to our home," he spoke exactly as the wise and experienced head of a grown-up family which they would wish him to be. He has missed no opportunity to advance the cause of peace, and no chance to remind the more fortunate among his people of the existence of undeserved misfortune among them. Indeed the KING has remembered everything and everybody, and he has done it in a manner which shows that his words are dictated by no mere tact, but by a warmly human heart. Least of all has he forgotten her to whom both he and his people owe so much—the QUEEN ; and it is not too much to say that his reference yesterday to "his dear wife" touched his audience to the same deep affection as inspired it.

It is small wonder that such a character so confirmed, and even to some revealed, should have evoked in the spokesmen of Parliament what the SPEAKER yesterday called "something warmer than allegiance and profounder than loyalty." The admirable speeches which were delivered in the House of Commons on Wednesday showed by their very informality how deeply all parties appreciate the fact that the CROWN has become a partner of Parliament in some of the greatest tasks which lie before this nation. For example, as the KING himself said yesterday, "the unity of the British Empire is no longer expressed by the supremacy" of the Parliament at

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Westminster, but "by a common allegiance to the Crown." And there are great general principles—the maintenance of liberty beneath the rule of an equal law, the need for social improvement, the active organisation of peace and of our own power to promote it—in the pursuit of which the CROWN has time and again shown that it can play a decisive part. These principles are common to all parties, and all parties have given testimony to the fact that the assistance of the Crown in the pursuit of them has been absolutely divorced from party politics. It is an essential part of our Constitution that there should exist an authority to serve as a constant reminder of the unity underlying the quarrels of all responsible statesmen, and capable of exerting the greatest influence whenever some situation or some measure arises in which that unity is most important. MR. LLOYD GEORGE paid a noble tribute to the part played by the KING in securing co-operation during the War. MR. LANSBURY called the appeal which the KING had made on Monday to the children and for the unfortunate "unsurpassed in the history of monarchs of any time." The PRIME MINISTER, in his magnificent tribute, singled out the KING's reminder of the existence of distressed areas; and the KING himself yesterday recalled the existence in our midst of those maimed and crippled in the service of the nation.

This list does not exhaust the occasions or the subjects upon which a constitutional monarch can co-operate with Parliament; but it is enough to show how widespread and how fruitful the co-operation of the present MONARCH has been, and how much more fruitful it has been than the old quarrels between the CROWN and Parliament, which the SPEAKER may have had in mind when he spoke yesterday of the homage of a "free Parliament," and the LORD CHANCELLOR when he spoke of the CROWN's rule "over a nation of free citizens." Yesterday's joint Session of Parliament would well justify the addition of a new sentence to the traditional phrases which open a gracious Speech from the Throne. All

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will hope that for many years HIS MAJESTY will be able to say, "My relations with foreign Powers continue to be friendly"; and all will know in their hearts that he could truly add, "and my relations with my own Parliament and people continue to be based on mutual respect, co-operation and love."

The language of the Press is, as a rule, of a high standard, but even *The Times* occasionally has lapses. What do you make of this? :—

Suddenly Iddon was bowled by Hammond and, horror of horrors, Paynter, trying to hit a ball to long-on which was going away from him, skied the ball back for an easy catch to the bowler. Oldfield is essentially one who delights in displaying a power of scoring, but now he had to stay and go on staying.

But that is the exception rather than the rule in the more responsible papers.

Here is an extract from *The Times* of April 22nd, 1859 :—

THE FIRST PUBLIC DRINKING FOUNTAIN

Yesterday afternoon the interesting ceremony of opening the first public drinking fountain was performed by Mrs. Wilson, the daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the presence of a large concourse of people. . . . Mrs. Wilson was conducted to the fountain, which was uncovered, and displayed a crystal jet of water. . . . Mr. Potter then handed to Mrs. Wilson a handsome silver cup, which she filled with water and drank of. Lord Radstock then briefly addressed the assemblage, pointing out the great good that must result from the erection of these fountains. . . . The assemblage then dispersed, and a number of people partook of the refreshing liquid.

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You will still find such stereotyped expressions as "interesting ceremonies," "large concourses," "crystal jets" and "refreshing liquids" in most provincial newspapers. *The Times* has grown up since 1859, and one cannot help wondering if, by 2020 A.D., the provincial press will have grown up too, and will be printing its news in the language of to-day's *Times*.

Here is a report printed in an American newspaper :—

In 1911, while living in Fort Worth, Texas, she was acquitted of murder by pleading the "unwritten law." She testified she shot and killed a divorcee in a department store because of her husband's friendship with the woman.

After the shooting she was reported to have gone to the law office of her husband, handed him the revolver and said simply : " I'm sorry." At the trial the defence attorney sang " Home, Sweet Home " as part of his plea, moving the jurors to tears.

On her last birthday Mrs. Brooks gave this as her recipe for long life : " Living the quiet, easy life, and trying to be good."

Descriptions of sport, in spite of inevitable technicalities, often rise to a very high level. Bernard Darwin makes golf interesting even to the non-player, and Neville Cardus, on cricket, is always readable. Here is an example of his style :—

THE AUSTRALIANS AT EASTBOURNE,
1921

MacLaren's Last Match

. . . But the impressions of this glorious match likely to last longest are of MacLaren. One will see him,

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white-haired and beautifully calm, standing in the slips beckoning a man to a more judicious place in the field. One will see him plucking at his trousers' knees in the old way, hitching them up before he slightly bends into the classic slip position. One will see him moving across the pitch at the over's end, taking now and then one of his bowler's by the arm and giving him a word of encouragement and advice. And if these impressions should fade in a while, surely one will never forget his walk to the pavilion at the game's end, the crowd pressing round him and cheering—MacLaren with his sweater over his shoulders, his face almost lost in the folds of it, looking down on the grass as he moves for good from the cricket field, seemingly but half aware of the praisegiving about him, seemingly thinking of other times.

and here is "Nimrod" writing in the language of the hunting field :—

. . . Two minutes more elapse ; another hound slips out of cover, and takes a short turn outside, with his nose to the ground and his stern lashing his side—thinking, no doubt, he might touch on a drag, should Reynard have been abroad in the night. Hounds have no business to *think*, *thinks* the second whipper-in, who observes him ; but one crack of his whip, with "Rasselas, Rasselas, where are you going, Rasselas ? *Get to cover, Rasselas*" ; and Rasselas immediately disappears. Five minutes more pass away. "No fox here," says one ; "Don't be in a hurry," cries Mr. Cradock ; "they are drawing it beautifully, and there is rare lying in it." These words are scarcely uttered when the cover shakes more than ever. Every stem appears alive, and it reminds us of a cornfield waving in the wind. In two minutes the sterns of some more hounds are seen "flourishing" above the gorse. "*Have at him there,*" holloas the Squire—the gorse still more alive, and hounds leaping over each other's backs.

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"*Have at him there again, my good hounds ; a fox for a hundred !*"

Food has a language all to itself. Here are two specimens of cookery-book English, the first from "Markham's English Housewife," and the second from any popular magazine of to-day.

To Roast a Pig

To roast a pig curiously, you shall not scall'd it, but draw it with the hair on, then having washt it, spit it and lay it to the fire, so as it may not scorch, then being a quarter roasted, and the skin blistered from the flesh, with your hand pull away the hair and skin, and leave all the fat and flesh perfectly bare ; then with your Knife scotch all the flesh down to the bones, then baste it exceedingly with butter and Cream, being no more but warm : then dredge it with fine bread crumbs, Currants, Sugar, and Salt mixt together ; and thus apply dredging upon basting, and basting upon dredging, till you have covered all the flesh a full inch deep. Then the meat being fully roasted, draw it, and serve it up whole.

How to make Rock Cakes

Rub 2 ozs. of margarine into $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of self-raising flour and add 3 ozs. of sugar and 3 ozs. of currants. Beat one egg with $\frac{1}{2}$ gill of milk and stir it in, taking care that the whole is evenly mixed—not stiff in one place and wet in another. Place in small, rocky heaps on a greased tin and bake in a hot oven for fifteen minutes.

But for obscurity and mystery legal and political English stand quite alone.

Does this mean much to you ? :—

Extracts from an Agreement

. . . WHEREAS the Owner is the owner in fee simple of an estate adjoining the River Thames and known as

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the Estate situate partly in the District of the **** Council and partly in the District of the §§§§ Council AND WHEREAS the Owner is desirous of preserving as a private open space subject to the provisions hereinafter contained a certain portion of the Estate of which said portion the outer edges are coloured green on the plan hereto annexed AND WHEREAS of the said portion the area of which the inner edges are coloured pink on the said plan is within the district of the **** Council and the area of which the inner edges are coloured yellow on the said plan is within the district of the §§§§ Council AND WHEREAS the **** Council are proposing to prepare a town planning scheme comprising the said area edged pink and the §§§§ Council are proposing to prepare a town planning scheme comprising the said area edged yellow AND WHEREAS the parties hereto have agreed that the said two areas shall respectively be included in the said schemes subject to the said provisions. . . .

Legal English is either deadly dull or else merely funny, as can be judged from this extract from the Bye-laws relating to Southwick Green, Sussex :—

No person other than an officer of the Council shall at any time on any part of the Common, enter any hedge or plantation, or walk, or run over, or stand, sit, or lie upon any shrub, underwood, gorse, furze, fern, heather, or plant, or any ground in course of preparation or cultivation as a flower bed or for the reception or growth of any shrub, underwood, gorse, furze, fern, heather or plant.

There is something rather beautiful in the idea of an Officer of the Council solemnly standing upon a plant, or running over the flower beds. You note that he may not run round and round, but only over and upon.

And I feel that this notice on a building at Oxford might have been expressed differently :—

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Twopence for each person not accompanied by a member of the University in academic dress. If a member of the University in academic cap and gown accompanies visitors to the Bodleian Library or to the Radcliffe Building, a fee of 1d each (for each building visited) is charged for each visitor above the number of ten, provided that the total amount shall not exceed 2/6 for each fifty visitors in the party (the first ten being in all cases left out of the counting as free). Thus a party of one hundred and ten, so accompanied, would count as one hundred and would pay 5/ (i.e. 2/6 for each fifty) and a party of sixty-three would count as fifty-three and would pay 2/9 (i.e. 2/6 for the first fifty and 1d for the remaining three).

Here are a couple of specimens of politician's English :—

You are faced with the problem of what to do in respect to this question, to that question, and to the other question, but perfectly obviously, after you have faced the more superficial aspects of the separate questions, you want to know in relation to a complete plan what you are actually giving and what you are actually getting. Therefore, when the departmental or compartmental exploration had gone on to a certain extent it cannot be finished until somebody, co-ordinating all your problems, sets out in one statement and declaration the complete scheme that this Conference can pass. . . .

To you who are members of the Opposition, which is being carried on in spite of repeated appeals made on more than one, even on many an occasion, not only from this side of the House but from others far outside it—others again to which I cannot refer within the compass of this present appeal—to you I say, that if there is one section of the community to whom the hearts and minds of those of us on this side of the House fly more than any other, it is that section whose very existence constitutes

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a first charge upon our consideration, even under circumstances which may, let us all hope, never arise.

I refer, of course, to the unemployed.

You may be able to guess why these extracts are not included in the chapter on Oratory.

My last specimen is of the language of the scientist, perhaps the most complex of all the minor languages. He is usually dealing with subjects that are utterly beyond the scope of the man in the street, and consequently he has evolved a language of his own, not only of words but of symbols as well.

Here is Professor Eddington writing in the simplest manner on Constants. "New Pathways in Science" is addressed to the more intelligent of the general public, and you will probably be able to get the gist of what he means, if not the whole. Had he been addressing a fellow-scientist we should not be able to understand one sentence.

Let us begin with the fine-structure constant. The name has reference to the structure of spectral lines, but the constant occurs more widely ; just as the velocity of light occurs in many problems unconnected with optics. The fine-structure constant is really the ratio of two natural units or atoms of action. The physical quantity rather inappropriately called "action" first became prominent in mechanics through Hamilton's Principle of Least Action ; it attained further importance in relativity theory because it is one of the very few absolute quantities (invariants) in physics ; and it reached its zenith in quantum theory because the quantum constant itself is a unit of action.

I have purposely avoided including any specimens of Advertiser's English in this chapter, as I feel that

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is more at home in the appendix on the Wrecking of English.

The searching out of these different minor languages is an interesting hobby. The field is enormous. Whatever you do or are interested in has its own particular vocabulary.

What particular trades, professions and sports use the following? How many can you place with certainty? :—

scut.	galley.	dactyl.
panchromatic.	spirket.	promerops.
creel.	touch-down.	andante.
peptone.	spavin.	evection.

CHAPTER XI

COMMON ERRORS

Pitfalls

THERE are probably tens of thousands of pitfalls lying in wait for you in the writing of English, just as there are in life, but it is possible to worry a good deal too much about making mistakes in English, just as it is possible to worry a good deal too much about the diseases that we may or may not catch. We're going to make mistakes anyway.

The important thing is to differentiate between mistakes that matter and mistakes that do not matter.

As your first object is to make yourself understood the worst mistake you can make is to be misunderstood. This can come about through ignorance of the rules of grammar, but it is even more likely to come about through foolishness of thought.

Get your mind clear first and you will probably find that the words necessary to express what is in your mind will also be exact and clear.

The English language has been quite needlessly and foolishly complicated by lawyers, politicians, tradesmen, bad poets, and a whole host of woolly-minded people, examples of whose work you will find in the Appendix.

Do not exaggerate the importance of common

The Writing of English

errors. As often as not in English a grammatical error becomes the correct fashion. The answer to "Who's there?" is nearly always "Me." People who say "I" are regarded as pedantic, though "I" is obviously correct.

But no one approves of "Between you and I"; and "Between you and me" is regarded not as pedantic, but the only correct way.

Split infinitives used to be a great bugbear, but few people worry nowadays whether you split them or not, so long as it makes better sense that way. There's little to choose between "I've got to seriously warn you" and "I've got to warn you seriously."

A mistake that I am always making is to separate the dependent clause from the noun to which it belongs, but it does occasionally, though seldom, lead to a possible misapprehension, as you see in the quotation I gave a few pages back about Paynter hitting a ball to long-on which was going away from him.

The use of "like" for "as" is very widespread and wholly inaccurate. You find it at its worst in some of the popular jazz verses of the day, which are presumably written by the semi-literate.

More inexcusable is the employment of clichés, overworked expressions of opinion or outworn metaphors.

It is only laziness that makes us continue to attach the same likeness every time we compare things.

"Slow as a snail," "quick as lightning" and "happy as a sandboy," mean nothing at all.

Common Errors

The Americans are wiser. Their similes are active.

"Busy as a tick on a turtle," is a good deal more vigorous than "busy as a bee."

"Thick as the dust on a circulating library's non-fiction"; "Cold as an Esquimo's nose." That's the way to use similes. Invent new ones or leave both similes and metaphors alone.

That bad English is simply laziness can be proved by listening to any two ordinary unintelligent people talking when they meet.

"How are you, Mrs. Brown?"

"Middling, thank you, and how are you, Mrs. White?"

"Oh! Mustn't grumble, and how's things, Mrs. Red?"

"Champion, thanks, and you, Mrs. Blue?"

"Oh, nicely, thanks, and how's yourself?"

And so it goes on, cliché upon cliché, with words tumbling out of people's mouths and nothing said.

Whenever I hear anyone say "You could have knocked me down with a feather," I want to run as far as possible from their presence. They are as bad as the people who talk about "preserve" when they mean jam, "give over" when they mean stop, "perspire" when they mean sweat, "close" when they mean hot, "sufficient" when they mean enough.

You remember how Jephthah used a test-word, "Shibboleth," to catch the escaping Ephraimites who could not pronounce the *sh*.

It would be an excellent thing for the purity and vigour of English if an Act of Parliament were passed

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making it a criminal offence to distort, mispronounce and murder our English words.

* * * * *

A most fascinating study is that of watching the change of meaning in words.

In the United States, if you use the word "homely" it is taken as an insult. In England we regard it as highly complimentary.

The people of Sussex have for centuries had the adjective "silly" applied to them, and they are rightly proud of it, because "silly" really means "saelig" or happy.

The family of Napier are rightly proud of their long lineage, but Professor Weekley tells us that their motto of N'apier, "without a peer," is falsely derived. The original napiers were the serving-men at table, the carriers of napkins.

The Napiers are not the only people to make mistakes in the history of surnames.

I once heard of a man of the name of Chugg who changed it to Howard under the impression that it was more ancient and therefore more honourable. He didn't realise that Chuggs were in England centuries before the Howards.

Words first get overworked until they lose their original meaning. Then they take on a totally different meaning. In the end they lose all meaning.

"Meticulous" is a much misused word. It doesn't mean careful. It means frightened.

"Nice" doesn't mean pleasant. It means precise or exact.

"Hectic" means habitual, and "chronic" means

Common Errors

lasting, but both these words have been transformed to quite illegitimate uses.

“Aggravated” has nothing to do with annoyance. It simply means to increase the burden.

“Ingenious” is not at all the same word as “ingenuous,” the first means skilful, the second almost the opposite, guileless or artless.

“Sabotage” means, as A. P. Herbert keeps on reminding us, the throwing of shoes by workmen into the machinery of their employers.

Never talk of “amenities” or the feminine “variety” or the masculine “persuasion.”

“Transpire” is a word to avoid. It does not mean “to happen.” It means to breathe through, to emerge from secrecy to knowledge.

Other words that savour of affectation, semi-literary ignorance, negligence or worse, are commence (used by jazz-band leaders), expectorate (used by town councils), cease (used by sergeants on the rifle-range), purchase and client (used by estate agents), expletive (used by non-swearers), and conceal (used by governesses).

Certain words put in a particular order have the power to make the bristles of our skin stand up, a shiver to go down our spine, and tears to come into our eyes, and we call those poetic words, but there is also fascination in tracing the history of words, many of which have had a long journey in time and space before settling down in our English life.

Polony comes from Bologna, indigo from India, pistol from Pistoia, damask from Damascus, copper from Cyprus, calico from Calicut, muslin from Mosul.

Pinchbeck was the name of a man, and so was the

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Gage who first made the greengage popular. Mackintosh, sandwich and macadam were all men.

You will find that it will add immensely to the ease with which you can conjure out of your memory the fitting word if you always adopt this attitude of curiosity to words, and try to find out why it is for instance, that there should be so many tens of thousands of people called Green and Brown and White and Black, but that you never meet a Mr. Red or a Mrs. Blue ?

* * * * *

One word about punctuation. It is quite true that the change of a stop can make all the difference. You remember the classic example : “ The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is as bold as a lion.”

Now try it this way :—

“ The wicked flea, when no man pursueth but the righteous, is as bold as a lion.”

The simplest rule is to treat stops as time-pauses, one beat for a comma, two beats for a semi-colon, three for a full-stop.

The old-fashioned colon has pretty well been eliminated, and even the semi-colon seems almost to have had its day.

The best writing needs the least punctuation.

APPENDIX

THE WRECKING OF ENGLISH

HALF of the specimens that follow might have been perfectly good English had the authors not attempted to be impressive.

The following is from a travel booklet, and explains why you should tour in the autumn :—

In the fall of the year the gorgeous pageantry of nature, hailing as it does the cessation of life in a final gesture of defiance to the sombreness of winter, flaunting before the eyes of humanity its final expression of glory and enthralling all who witness, is offering to the true lover of the phenomena of the seasons a spectacle which can scarcely be ignored. Many are those who give vent to their love of colour, brilliant, majestic, over-powering, by touring the country byways, particularly where arboreal beauty is most predominant and gazing in rapture as the vistas of pigmentation spread themselves before their vision.

Here is a batch of mixed metaphors, one of the commonest of all mistakes :—

The Council was still putting its house in order, and he was anxious that they should not change horses crossing the stream whilst there was so much spade work to be done.—*Harrow Observer and Gazette*.

Beneath the thin ice of civilisation the killer shark circles the blubbering whale. The world grows worse, not better ; while the Green Hell of the Chaco, written in letters of blood and oil, squats like some giant toad on the brow of the angel of peace.—Letter in the *Kent and Sussex Courier*.

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. . . The satellite town, with its wide belt of sterilised land, is a concrete proposition ; but works are essential to anchor the population, and no practical or certain means of planting these has yet been suggested.—Letter to *The Times*.

The police and the volunteers have taken strategic posts along every possible line of escape; and gradually this cordon will move in until, like rabbits in a mown cornfield, the killers will stand at bay.—*Daily Express*.

It would not be too much to say that thousands of them are being crucified upon the cross of juggernaut commerce.—*Political Pamphlet*.

* * * *

Now for the Letter to the Editor. Why is it that so many people write to perfect strangers in this vein ? :—

SIR,

My mother had a habit of kicking off her slippers when sitting at the table.

I had forgotten all about it, until I found one of my daughters doing the same thing. I am certain it had never been mentioned to her.

Yours, etc.

And I can't help feeling that the following is also a waste of time, paper and stamp :—

DEAR SIR,

In to-day's issue of to-day's — I notice a review of a book "Round About England." Surely the title should be "Round About Britain," as the book is also about Scotland ?

This unmannerly habit of English people is really quite unpardonable.

Why are English people so careless of another nation's feelings ?

I am,

Your faithfully, etc.

Appendix

You remember what I said about the danger of hate-letters being written in fury and read in cold blood ?

If, after having read this book, you feel that the letters printed below are good letters, I shall be sorry :—

SIR,

Some friends of mine introduced me to a most attractive girl a few weeks ago. Although we hardly exchanged more than a dozen words then, I have often passed her in the street since, and whenever I do, I go red in the face and feel embarrassed and awkward. I wonder if any of your readers can tell me if this is love at first sight, and if so, what would they advise me to do about it ?

“ TWENTY-ONE.”

Letter in the *Portsmouth Evening News*.

SIR,

I have a six-year-old French poodle that has been showing some peculiar symptoms lately. In fact, at times I am greatly embarrassed by the noises emanating from the animal. While the animal is sleeping or lying down, there will be loud gurgling and bubbling sounds that apparently come from his stomach. These sounds do not appear to annoy the animal, but they are annoying to the family.

MRS. HELEN —.

Letter in the *New York Daily Mirror*.

SIR,

I agree with Mr. Reginald Pound. Our horrible English reserve is selfishness. But the ice can be thawed. I frequent many hotels and hydros, and I always have one objective in view—to make everyone a little happier and a little better for my being there.

I have been nicknamed “ the Smiler ” and “ Little Leaven. ” Why do not others “ please copy ” ?

W. K. L.

Letter in the *Daily Express*.

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SIR,

Last October you gave prominence to a letter of mine in which, advocating economy as the first and foremost necessity for the healing of the nation, I ventured to quote a saying of Cicero, *Magnum vectigal est parsimonia*. To-day allow me to quote Sophocles. . . .

Letter in *The Times*.

Never write to the Press unless you have something of importance to say. It seems a pity to be printed (as quite a number of these letters are) solely because one's conceit or ignorance makes one unintentionally funny.

I found the following leaflet strewn in numbers on the South Downs, near Brighton :—

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, ——— beg to state that owing to a very slight misunderstanding between two people outside the Society, which could have easily been rectified had I been informed of the matter and allowed to state my case to the full committee, I have been forced by the said committee to give up the part of Yum-Yum, 10 days only before the production of "The Mikado" at The ——— Cinema, ———. The committee which judged me unheard, I understand, consisted of THREE MEMBERS only, two more being brought in at the last moment to make a quorum. The unfair way in which they heard only one side of the matter in hand, and the fact that this proceeded behind my back, combined with the intolerable behaviour of a certain member of the cast, this being passed over, leaves me no alternative but to make it clearly understood that I wish to entirely disassociate myself from The ——— Philharmonic and Orchestral Society.

It is high time that this Society was carried on in a

Appendix

business-like way, as all other such Societies are ; that is, run by its committee.

(Signed) ———.

* * * * *

Four American Press cuttings :—

WORDS OFTEN MISUSED : Do not say, “ We shall have to face the music.” Say, “ Confront the consequences.”

From “ Improve Your English,” in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

The letter was handed to Miss Keislich for identification. Her lips quivered and she began to weep. Justice Carew looked at her and said : “ What are you boiling so much over for ? ”—*The Herald Tribune*.

On Thursday of last week the coaching launch *Frank Thompson*, caught on fire, and the flames spread so quickly that Coach Whiteside, Manager Angier, and the engineer, Arthur Sims, had to hurry in getting out.—From the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*.

Timidity is a fault for which it is dangerous to reprove persons whom we wish to correct of it.—*Cranford (N. J.) Citizen and Chronicle*.

* * * * *

Perhaps the best examples of how not to write fiction are the works of that now forgotten novelist of last century, Amanda Ross.

Even the classic writers have their bad moments. There is something seriously wrong about this passage from “ Lorna Doone ” :—

“ Ensie, dear,” I said quite gently, grieving that he should see his wicked father killed, “ run up yonder round the corner, and try and find a bunch of bluebells for the pretty lady.” The child obeyed me, hanging back, and looking back, and then laughing, while I

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prepared for business. There and then I might have killed mine enemy, with a single blow, while he lay unconscious ; but it would have been foul play.

Perhaps Mr. Galsworthy's attention was distracted when he wrote, in "Swan Song" :—

In that long kiss her very spirit seemed to leave her ; she could not even see whether his eyes were open, or, like hers, closed.

And there is no excuse whatever for this sort of thing :—

"And I love you," she said. "But I love England even more."

"I'll accept that," he said. "If you love England you love me. It is our country. It is a grand thing that you, a woman, love her so much that you could set aside——"

"Say no more," she said.

"I will not, Anna—save this. Lift your head—so ! I'm going to kiss you full on the lips. Great woman ! Say it after me, 'God save the King !' "

"God save the King," she said, and tightened her arms around his neck.

From a recent novel.

And then with one quick gesture he had her in his arms. "Oh, you lovely thing," he said.

Fifi fought. "No !"

"Oh, Fifi !"

"Tony, let me go."

"Never !"

"Tony !"

"Darling !"

"Stop it !"

"No."

"No, Tony."

"No !"

"No !"

Appendix

"No !"

"No !"

"No !"

"No !"

"No !"

"No !"

"No !"

The telephone rang.

From a story by George Bradshaw in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

I stood on the platform with him, watching his sunburnt, handsome face, keen grey eyes and firm jaw, upright as a dart, a man who stood out above his fellows.

From a recent novel.

* * * * *

THE LITERARY BURGLAR

G—— L—— B——, 28, sign writer, was jointly charged with S—— R—— H——, 30, labourer, with breaking and entering a house at Horne, and stealing rings and other articles valued at £60.

B—— pleaded guilty, and in his statement said :

"About eight o'clock in the morning of Friday Jan. 12, 1934, a casual observer would have discerned my comrade H—— and myself emerging from the stately portals of the Epsom Poor Law Institution.

"No event of consequence occurred between Epsom Town and Redhill, except that we called at the domain of a venerated justice of the peace, and, having acquainted him with the degree of our adversity, were promptly regaled with shepherd's pie of comely proportions."

The statement continued that later in the evening B—— and H—— became hungry again, so B—— knocked on the door of a house at Horne to ask for food. He added :

"Receiving no answer to my knocking I assumed that the proprietors had departed in search of pleasure, and,

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acting on a sudden impulse, I forced a window with a pair of scissors in my possession and entered the house.

"I then summoned my comrade H——, who, thinking I had received an invitation to tea, sallied blithely forth, but on observing my position his countenance registered intense consternation and profound deprecation. When I offered him an orange it was accepted with marked reluctance."

"My intentions to invade the larder were frustrated owing to the apartment where that worthy closet is usually situated being occupied, according to the sounds emanating from there, by several capable members of the canine persuasion. Being anxious to retain my nether extremities in a state of preservation, I vacated the apartment in question, and acting upon an impulse went upstairs and purloined the articles of jewellery.

"After this we went to a field and examined the spoils, but being unable to discriminate between the products of Woolworths and Bond-street we decided to dispose of it, and forthwith interred it in Mother Earth."

When this statement was read Mr. Martineau said :
"It is a great pity that anyone who has such talent and capabilities as the man who wrote it should be in a dock."

B——, who had nine previous convictions, was sentenced to two years' hard labour. Sentence was postponed on H—— until next Quarter Sessions.

Two years' hard labour seems inadequate for this grotesque distortion of the King's English.

* * * * *

Now for some examples of Advertisers' English. This is a letter that came through the post to my house recently :—

HULLO DELIGHTFULS,

Here we are again—for the next 10 DAYS we are offering — Breathlessly Smart 6½ Guinea Sports Clothes for 4½ Guineas.

Appendix

At — you will find the perfect Sports Clothes—the feminine reply to Saville Row's masculine craftsmanship—Invincibly Chic—Man Tailored and cut with deadly precision by Super craftsmen in the — Standard of correctness.

A — outfit will complete your Spring Wardrobe and give you an utterly new thrill about yourself. Come and see them in all their glory. You can't be too soon.

Yours obediently,

—,
The Wizard of Sports Clothes.

P.S.—Do See —'s Utterly New Weathercoat—this time with Hook and Eye Fastening.

Among the garments illustrated in an accompanying catalogue were "Utterly New Swim Suits," "Terribly Terribly County Mannish Suits," "Too Mahvelous Four Pocketed Heart Swellers," and "Pulse Accelerating Swim Suits."

Bulb growers pride themselves on their letter-writing abilities, and it seems a tradition that some such fragrant offering as the following should be prominently printed in their catalogues :—

TO OUR ESTEEMED CUSTOMERS AND ALL LOVERS OF
FLOWERS,

Here we are again with our new Spring catalogue. We knew you were waiting for it—we knew that months ago—and now see what we have prepared for you. We have made it quite easy, but firstly look it through. Did you? All right, and what was your first impression? Cheap, is it not?

Did you also read at the foot of page seven our new expression: "Cheaper than dirt-cheap"? Please, read it through and be convinced. We cultivate the bulbs for you for years at a stretch in order to see you satisfied. Ah, now we see the smile on your face. You think about that funny firm working for the satisfaction of its

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customers. There must be something behind all this. Yes, there is, but no more than "something." We do not need much, only a small profit. Look at the prices and ask yourself : "Do we not sell our products cheaper than dirt-cheap ?"

And now we suggest that you make yourself comfortable by the fire, giving no thought to the fact that it may be snowing or even freezing, but think that you are just entering your summer garden. You see the sun shining, you hear the birds singing, perhaps the remembrance of past summer days make you long for the next. Surely they are coming, and they will make life so much more pleasant and gay. Oh ! That sweet smell of the thousands of flowers and the sweet perfume of the Roses in the late evening when you are walking through your garden. All is quiet now ; the flowers are sleeping and you are quite alone, musing amidst the wealth of flowers.

Was it not a real summer for you, sitting by the fire and thinking only of the future, but how do you think of living to see those things ? We cannot live on poetry and contemplation only. To reach these high moments in life, we have to be practical. You cannot expect a nice garden without doing anything further. We send the bulbs, plants or roses distinctly labelled in just the suitable package. You put them in the garden or set them in the right place indoors and await the results. That's all. And now the decision is left to you. Why should you hesitate ? The money ? That is impossible : you are sure you get the bulbs practically for nothing.

We thank you for having read through this foreword, and as our articles are the real representation of our firm, we may safely say : "Till we meet in your garden next summer."

We are,
Yours faithfully,

Here are some remarkable statements from
American advertisers :—

Appendix

Madame Adrienne will be here personally, the week of October 22nd, to discuss with Chicago women their poitrine problems.

Don't you think "Dorothy" is a pretty name for a girl? Can't you just imagine one with that name as having beautiful golden hair, lustrous blue eyes, delicate complexion, sweet disposition, and a dazzling smile. Could there be anything more attractive, except our healthy, vigorous Baby Chicks. 15 breeds. Advance orders only. Errett's Hatchery, 118 North Washington.

It was in May, motoring in the Auvergne mountains, on our way to Saint Martin. It had just rained. The country seemed washed and shaved ready to receive us. The sun was shining on the virgin green prairies, upon which herds of Cantal cows were feeding. . . . At this moment, I was inspired and visualised a new brown which I will call Cantal Brown. This is the shade of the cows in that section of the country, known as the Salers Breed. . . . We will launch this shade in Paris this Fall.

From a booklet issued by the Lexington, Va., Chamber of Commerce.

Thousands of visitors drive through the Pass each spring when the rhododendron is in bloom. The rhododendron season in the Pass has been made famous by Matthew Fontaine Maury, the Pathfinder of the Seas, who requested that his body be carried through Goshen Pass when the rhododendron was in bloom.

Write for date ; we will be glad to advise you just when the rhododendron is at its best.

Among the most picturesque scenes of nature in Central Wisconsin, beneath shady pine groves, along clear streams, are raised the most magnificent thoroughbred hogs, that are destined to become luscious Triangle Hams. Like the vestals of old they are brought to the great Oscar Mayer Temple, where they are put to death in the most soothing sanitary manner, and transformed

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as if by magic into Wonderful Triangle Hams.—*Menu of the Triangle Restaurant in Chicago.*

And here is an advertisement that appeared in the *Morning Post* on May 26th, 1830 :—

MATCHLESS PET LADY-DOG FOR DISPOSAL.—To single or other Gentlewoman, etc. of independence, being Amateurs of the like domestic companionable Animal.—A British Officer, in expectation of proceeding abroad forthwith upon an expedition of martial enterprize, has placed in the local charge of a highly respectable, middle-aged, childless, widow Lady, of extreme humanity and amiability, as of assimilating penchant (long his incumbent, and to whom untoward circumstances on her side induce him, ere he departs, thus to recommend to particular notice), a young, full-grown, peculiarly small, most elegantly symmetrical and cleanly thorough-bred PET DOG, of the now very rare true Marlborough or Blenheim stock, deemed by those best competent to determine its several points to be at once perfect, unique, and of surpassing beauty, the which would either be presented to such an one, upon an understanding hereafter to be explained, or SOLD outright at a consideration commensurate with its acknowledged superior qualities : that being consequently extraordinarily high, it is presumed none will put themselves to the trouble of inquiry after who are not ostensibly prepared to meet one or the other of these expectations. Apply on whatever afternoon of the current week. . . .

But the worst murderers of English are those who write the lyrics of our fox-trots, and with them I take my leave of the wreckers, not at all unwillingly.

*Like the roses need their fragrance,
Like a sweetheart needs a kiss,
Like the summer needs the sunshine,
Like a laddie needs a miss,*

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Like a broken heart needs gladness,
Like the flowers need the dew,
Like a baby needs its mother,
That's how I need you.

All my to-days is days of sorrow,
There ain't no dawn to my to-morrow ;
Just one more fool for that thing they call love,
Acted like I should never of.

CHORUS

If I had of knew what I'd ought to of knew,
I'd never of did what I done,
If I had of saw we was breaking God's law,
I'd never of kissed you in fun.
I thought love was glad, didn't mean to be bad,
But the passions we had druv the both of us mad.
But if I had of knew what a fool would of knew.
I'd never of did what I done.

I love you *like* a copper loves to sleep,
And *like* a little newsboy loves a pie.
I love you *like* a baby loves to creep,
Well, if I don't love you, Mame, I hope to die.
I love you *like* the kids love street pianos,
I love you *like* a gambler loves a game ;
Just *like* the Reuben loves the Tenderloin I love you.
Well, say, kid, that's how I love you, Mame.

That ought to inspire you to write correctly or to
avoiding writing at all.

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